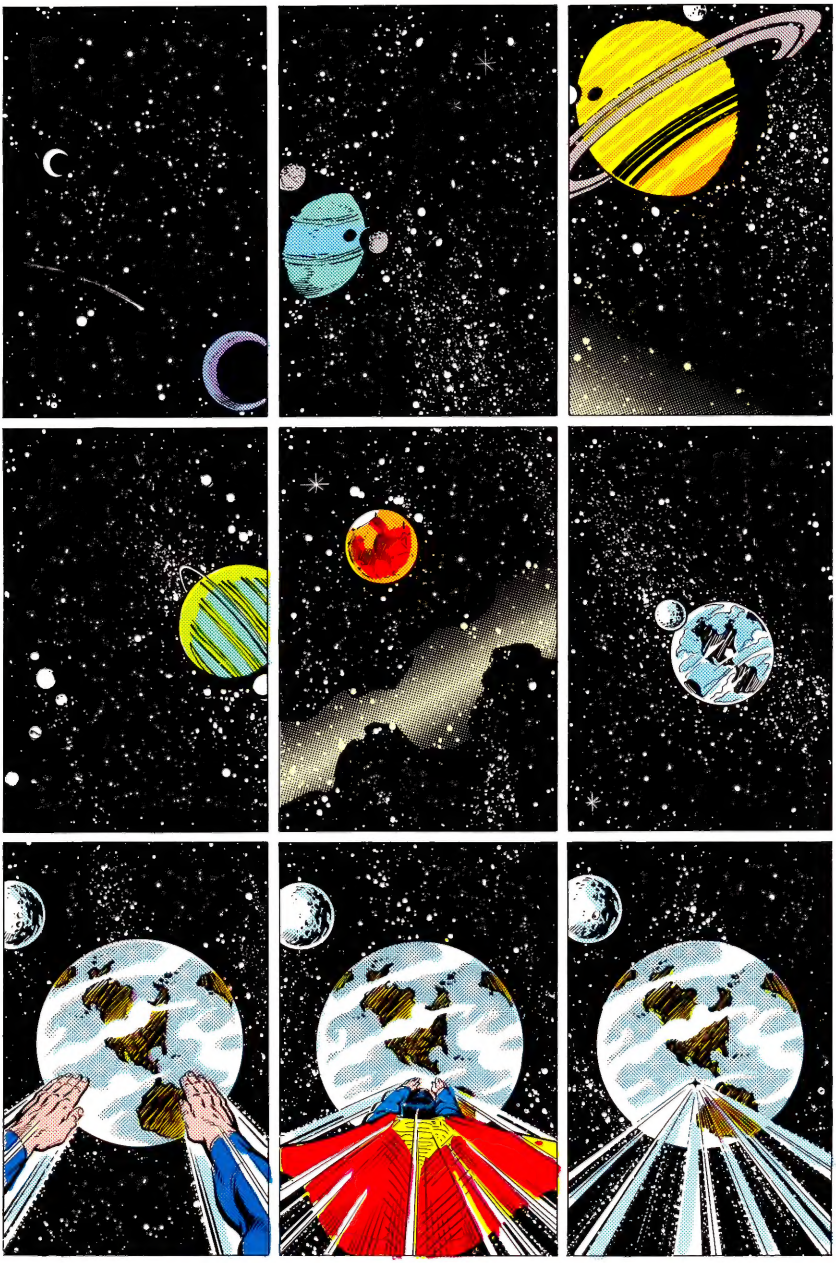
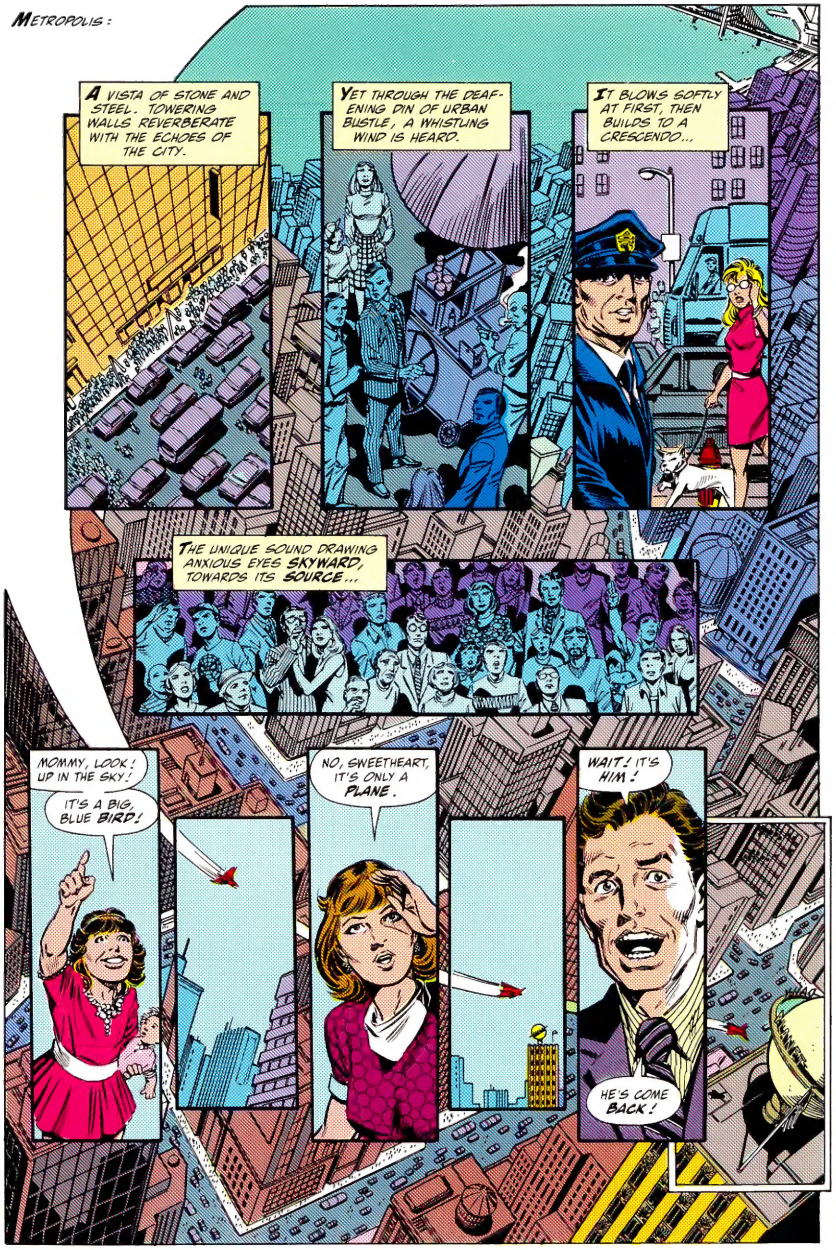
SUPERMAN

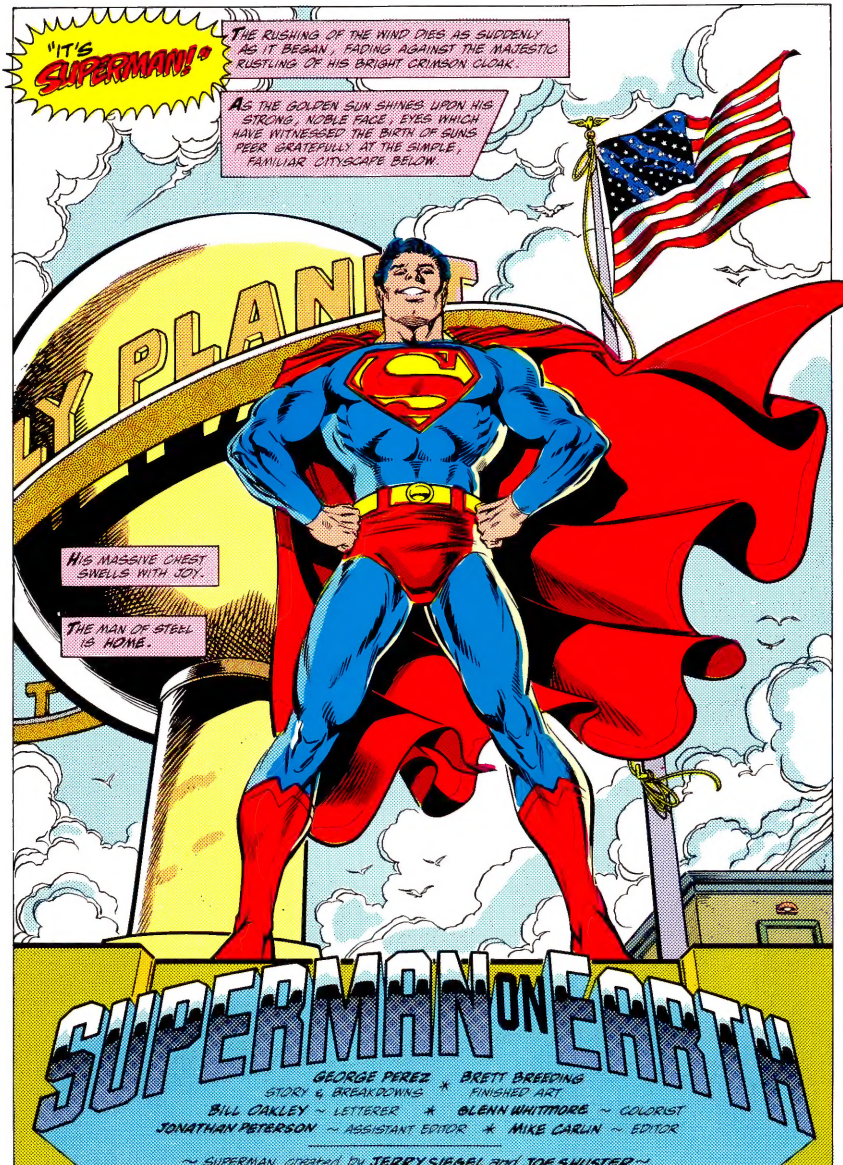
Post-CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS

Volume 29:

Superman on Earth




METROPOLIS:
A VISTA OF STONE AND STEEL. TOWERING WALLS REVERBERATE WITH THE ECHOES OF THE CITY.
YET THROUGH THE DEAFENING DIN OF URBAN BUSTLE, A WHISTLING WIND IS HEARD.
IT BLOWS SOFTLY AT FIRST, THEN BUILDS TO A CRESCENDO...
THE UNIQUE SOUND DRAWING ANXIOUS EYES SKYWARD, TOWARDS ITS SOURCE...
MOMMY, LOOK! UP IN THE SKY!
IT'S A BIG, BLUE BIRD!
NO, SWEETHEART, IT'S ONLY A PLANE.
WAIT! IT'S HIM!
HE'S COME BACK!


"IT'S SUPERMAN!"
THE RUSHING OF THE WIND DIES AS SUDDENLY AS IT BEGAN, FADING AGAINST THE MAJESTIC RUSTLING OF HIS BRIGHT CRIMSON CLOAK.
AS THE GOLDEN SUN SHINES UPON HIS STRONG, NOBLE FACE, EYES WHICH HAVE WITNESSED THE BIRTH OF SUNS PEER GRATEFULLY AT THE SIMPLE, FAMILIAR CITYSCAPE BELOW.
HIS MASSIVE CHEST SWELLS WITH JOY.
THE MAN OF STEEL IS HOME.
SUPERMAN ON EARTH
GEORGE PEREZ ★ BRETT BREEDING
STORY & BREAKDOWNS FINISHED ART
BILL OAKLEY ~ LETTERER ★ GLENN WHITMORE ~ COLORIST
JONATHAN PETERSON ~ ASSISTANT EDITOR ★ MIKE CARLIN ~ EDITOR
~ SUPERMAN created by JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER ~

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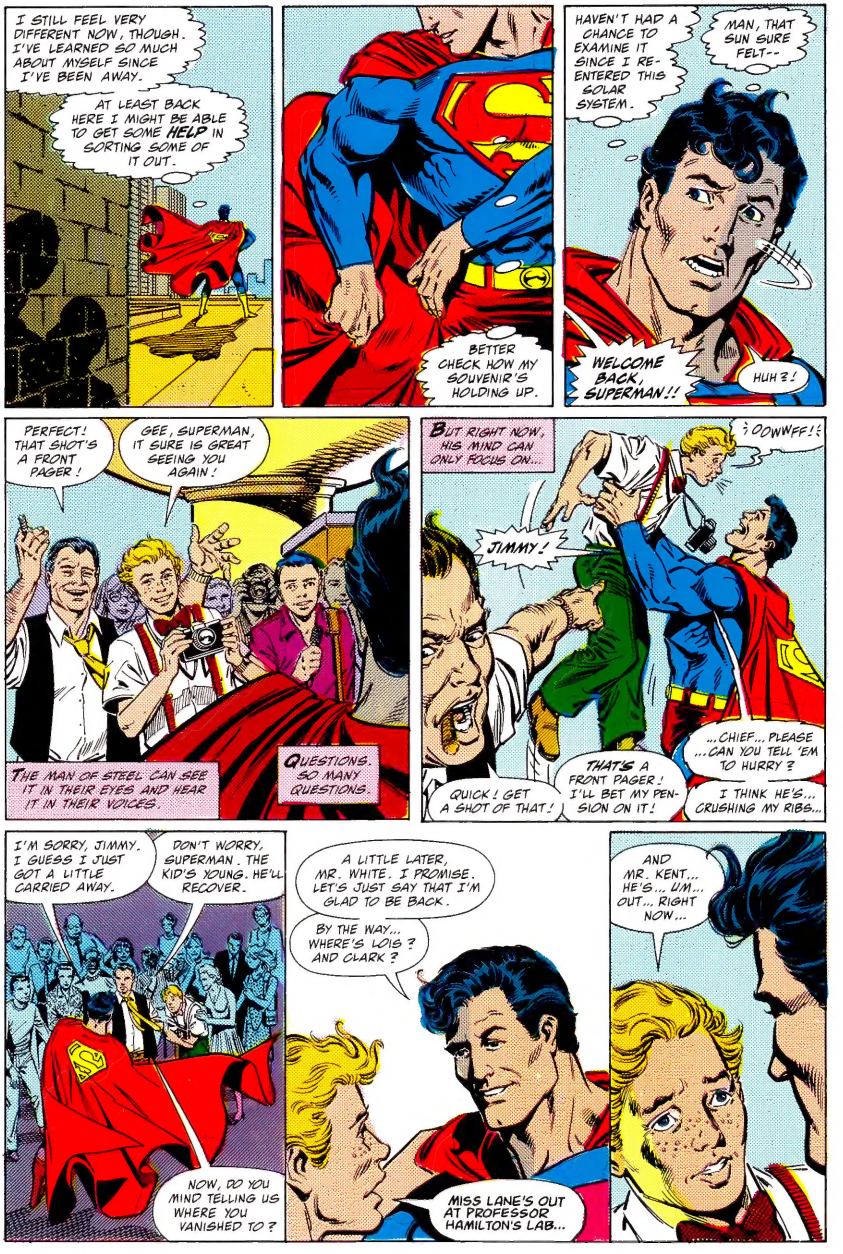
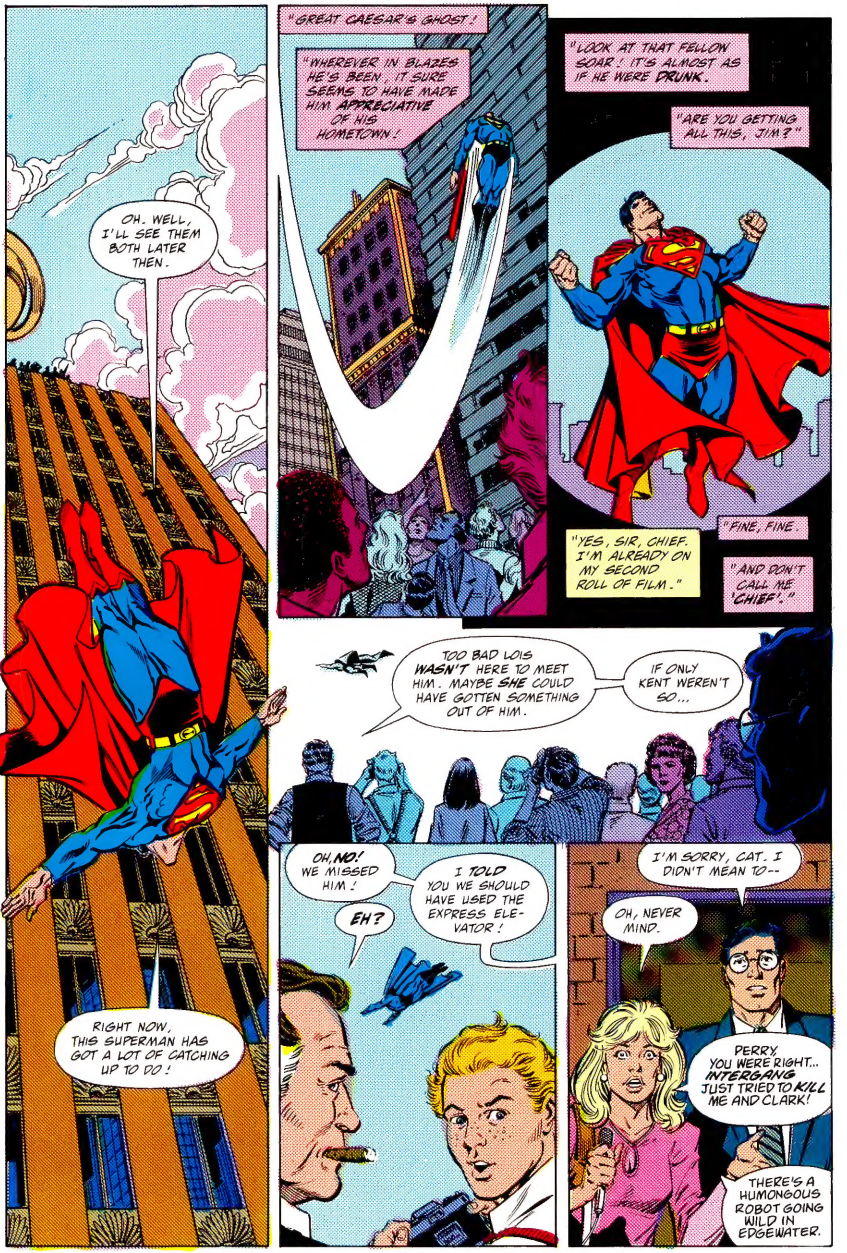
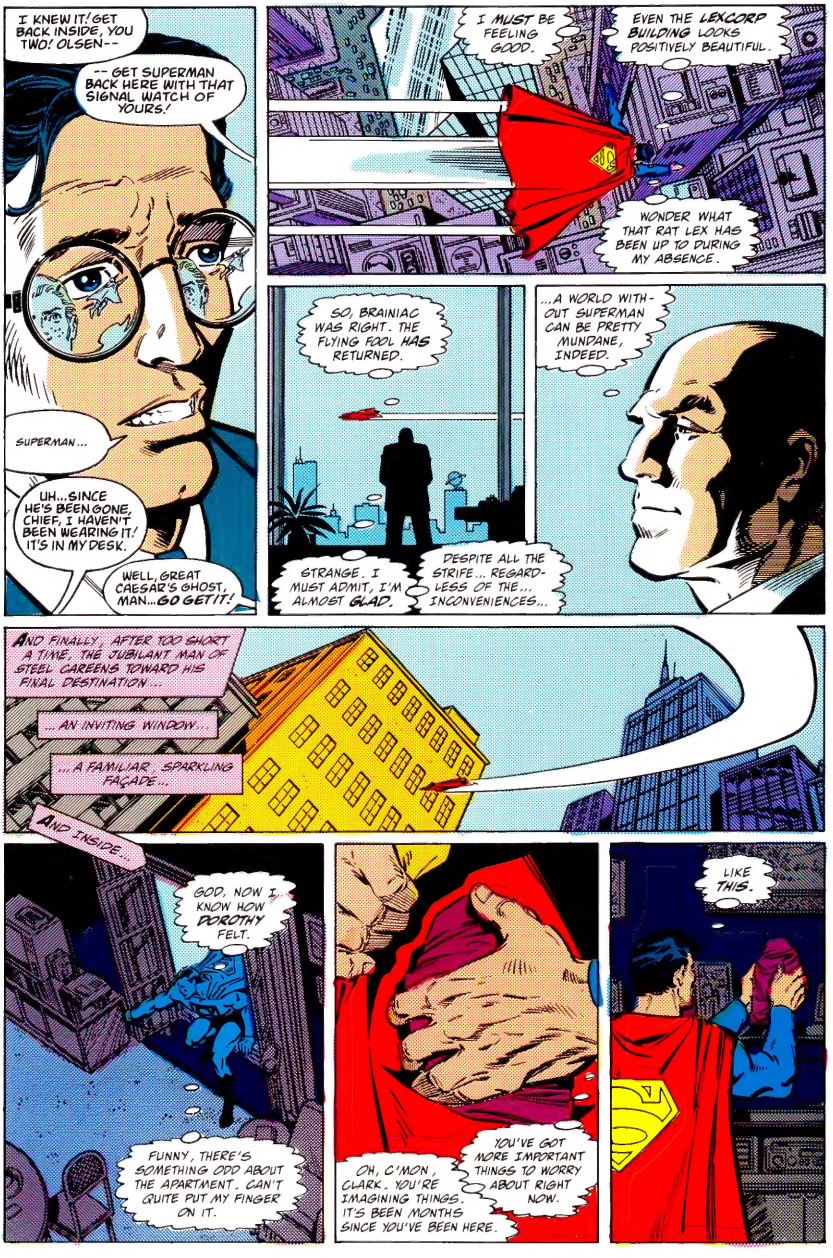
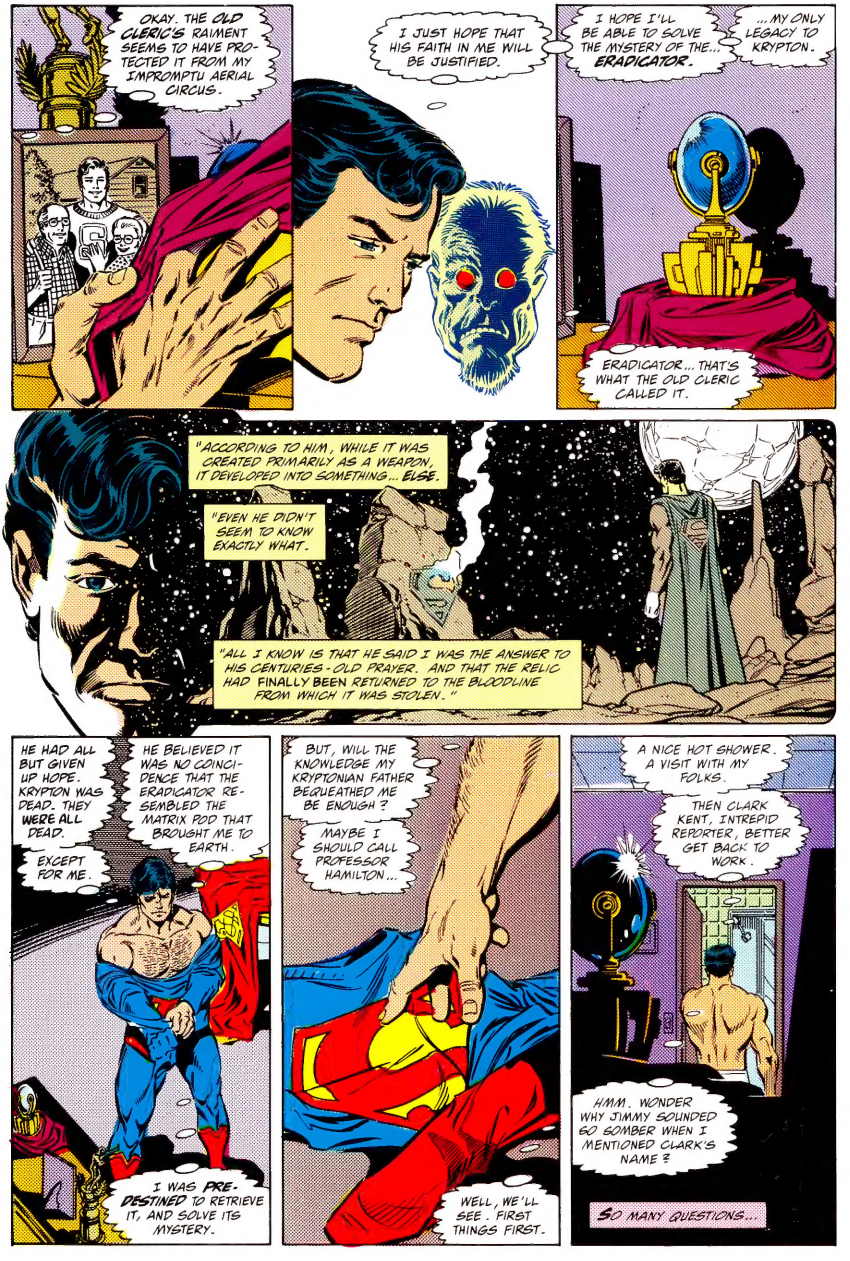
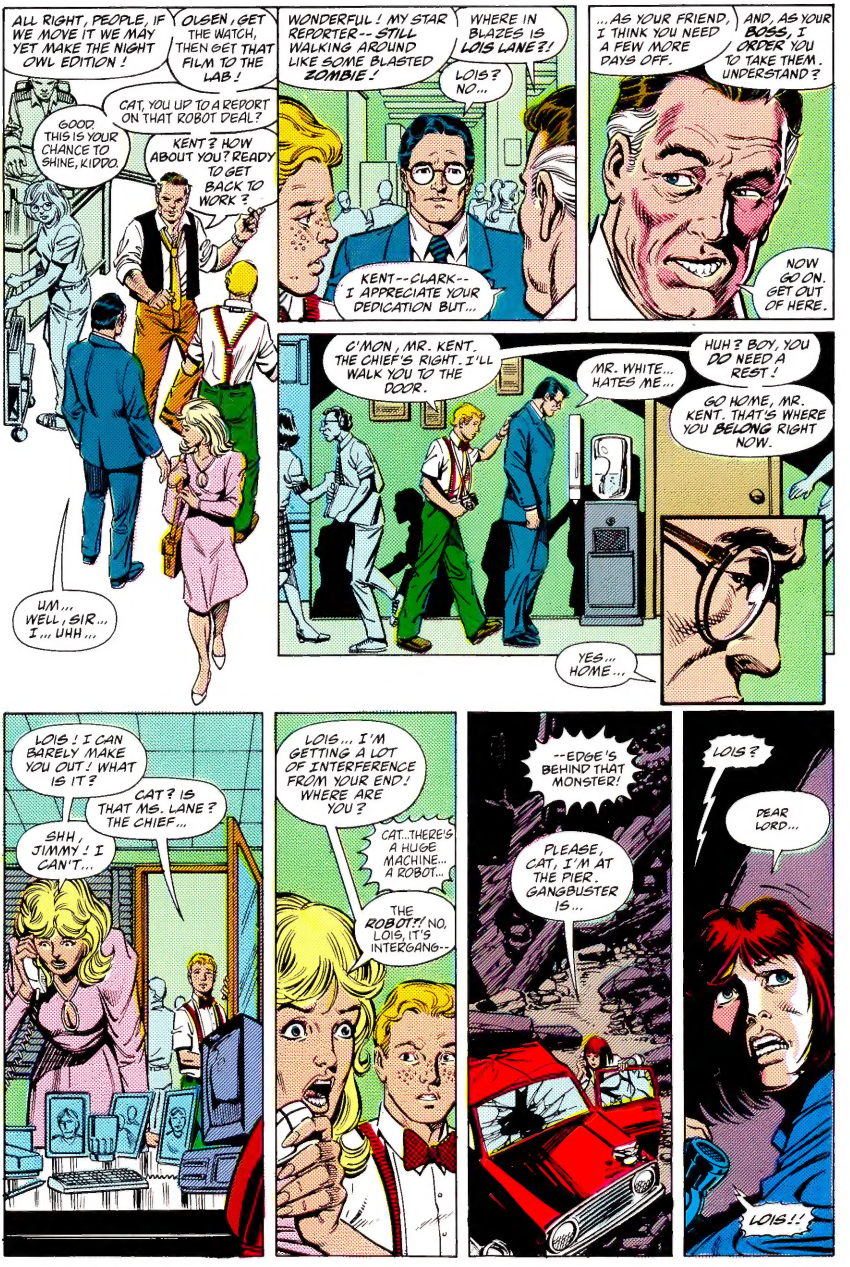
THAT AIR. I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK I'D NEVER BREATHE IT AGAIN.
IT MAY BE A BIT POLLUTED -- LIKE ANY BIG CITY'S -- BUT RIGHT NOW IT SMELLS AS SWEET TO ME AS A WHOLE FIELD OF ROSES.
AND THE SOUNDS! GOD, I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN HOW METROPOLIS SOUNDED.
SO MUCH ACTIVITY. SO MUCH LIFE.
SO MUCH TO SEE.
"KIDS.
"EVERYDAY PEOPLE.
"THE NATURAL GREEN BEAUTY OF METRO PARK.
"THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF PROGRESS."
SOAK IT ALL IN, CLARK, OL' BUDDY...
BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE YOU DEFINITELY BELONG.

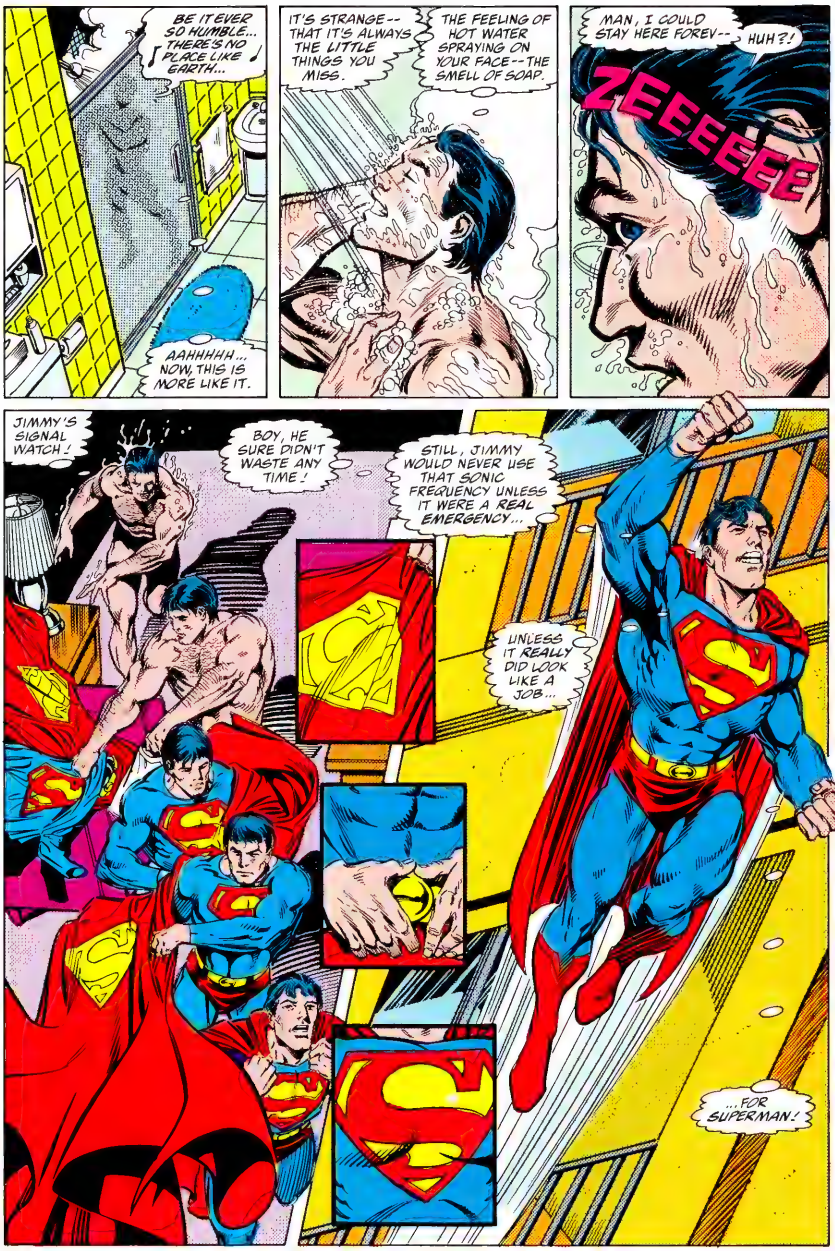

I STILL FEEL VERY DIFFERENT NOW, THOUGH. I'VE LEARNED SO MUCH ABOUT MYSELF SINCE I'VE BEEN AWAY.
AT LEAST BACK HERE I MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET SOME HELP IN SORTING SOME OF IT OUT.
BETTER CHECK HOW MY SOUVENIR'S HOLDING UP.
HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO EXAMINE IT SINCE I RE-ENTERED THIS SOLAR SYSTEM.
MAN, THAT SUN SURE FELT--
WELCOME BACK, SUPERMAN!!
HUH?!
PERFECT! THAT SHOT'S A FRONT PAGER!
GEE, SUPERMAN, IT SURE IS GREAT SEEING YOU AGAIN!
THE MAN OF STEEL CAN SEE IT IN THEIR EYES AND HEAR IT IN THEIR VOICES.
QUESTIONS. SO MANY QUESTIONS.
BUT RIGHT NOW, HIS MIND CAN ONLY FOCUS ON...
JIMMY!
ODWWFF!
QUICK! GET A SHOT OF THAT!
THAT'S A FRONT PAGER! I'LL BET MY PENSION ON IT!
...CHIEF... PLEASE ...CAN YOU TELL 'EM TO HURRY?
I THINK HE'S... CRUSHING MY RIBS...
I'M SORRY, JIMMY. I GUESS I JUST GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY.
DON'T WORRY, SUPERMAN. THE KID'S YOUNG. HE'LL RECOVER.
NOW, DO YOU MIND TELLING US WHERE YOU VANISHED TO?
A LITTLE LATER, MR. WHITE. I PROMISE. LET'S JUST SAY THAT I'M GLAD TO BE BACK.
BY THE WAY... WHERE'S LOIS? AND CLARK?
MISS LANE'S OUT AT PROFESSOR HAMILTON'S LAB...
AND MR. KENT... HE'S... UM... OUT... RIGHT NOW...


"GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST!"
"WHEREVER IN BLAZES HE'S BEEN, IT SURE SEEMS TO HAVE MADE HIM APPRECIATIVE OF HIS HOMETOWN!
"LOOK AT THAT FELLOW SOAR! IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE WERE DRUNK.
"ARE YOU GETTING ALL THIS, JIM?"
"YES, SIR, CHIEF. I'M ALREADY ON MY SECOND ROLL OF FILM."
"FINE, FINE.
"AND DON'T CALL ME 'CHIEF'."
OH. WELL, I'LL SEE THEM BOTH LATER THEN.
RIGHT NOW, THIS SUPERMAN HAS GOT A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO!
TOO BAD LOIS WASN'T HERE TO MEET HIM. MAYBE SHE COULD HAVE GOTTEN SOMETHING OUT OF HIM.
IF ONLY KENT WEREN'T SO...
OH, NO! WE MISSED HIM!
I TOLD YOU WE SHOULD HAVE USED THE EXPRESS ELEVATOR!
EH?
I'M SORRY, CAT. I DIDN'T MEAN TO--
OH, NEVER MIND.
PERRY, YOU WERE RIGHT... INTERGANG JUST TRIED TO KILL ME AND CLARK!
THERE'S A HUMONGOUS ROBOT GOING WILD IN EDGEWATER.


I KNEW IT! GET BACK INSIDE, YOU TWO! OLSEN--
-- GET SUPERMAN BACK HERE WITH THAT SIGNAL WATCH OF YOURS!
SUPERMAN...
UH...SINCE HE'S BEEN GONE, CHIEF, I HAVEN'T BEEN WEARING IT! IT'S IN MY DESK.
WELL, GREAT CAESAR'S GHOST, MAN...GO GET IT!
I MUST BE FEELING GOOD.
EVEN THE LEXCORP BUILDING LOOKS POSITIVELY BEAUTIFUL.
WONDER WHAT THAT RAT LEX HAS BEEN UP TO DURING MY ABSENCE.
SO, BRAINIAC WAS RIGHT. THE FLYING FOOL HAS RETURNED.
STRANGE. I MUST ADMIT, I'M ALMOST GLAD.
DESPITE ALL THE STRIFE... REGARDLESS OF THE... INCONVENIENCES...
...A WORLD WITHOUT SUPERMAN CAN BE PRETTY MUNDANE, INDEED.
AND FINALLY, AFTER TOO SHORT A TIME, THE JUBILANT MAN OF STEEL CAREENS TOWARD HIS FINAL DESTINATION...
... AN INVITING WINDOW...
... A FAMILIAR SPARKLING FAÇADE...
AND INSIDE...
GOD. NOW I KNOW HOW DOROTHY FELT.
FUNNY, THERE'S SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THE APARTMENT. CAN'T QUITE PUT MY FINGER ON IT.
OH, C'MON, CLARK. YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS. IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE YOU'VE BEEN HERE.
YOU'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT RIGHT NOW.
LIKE THIS.

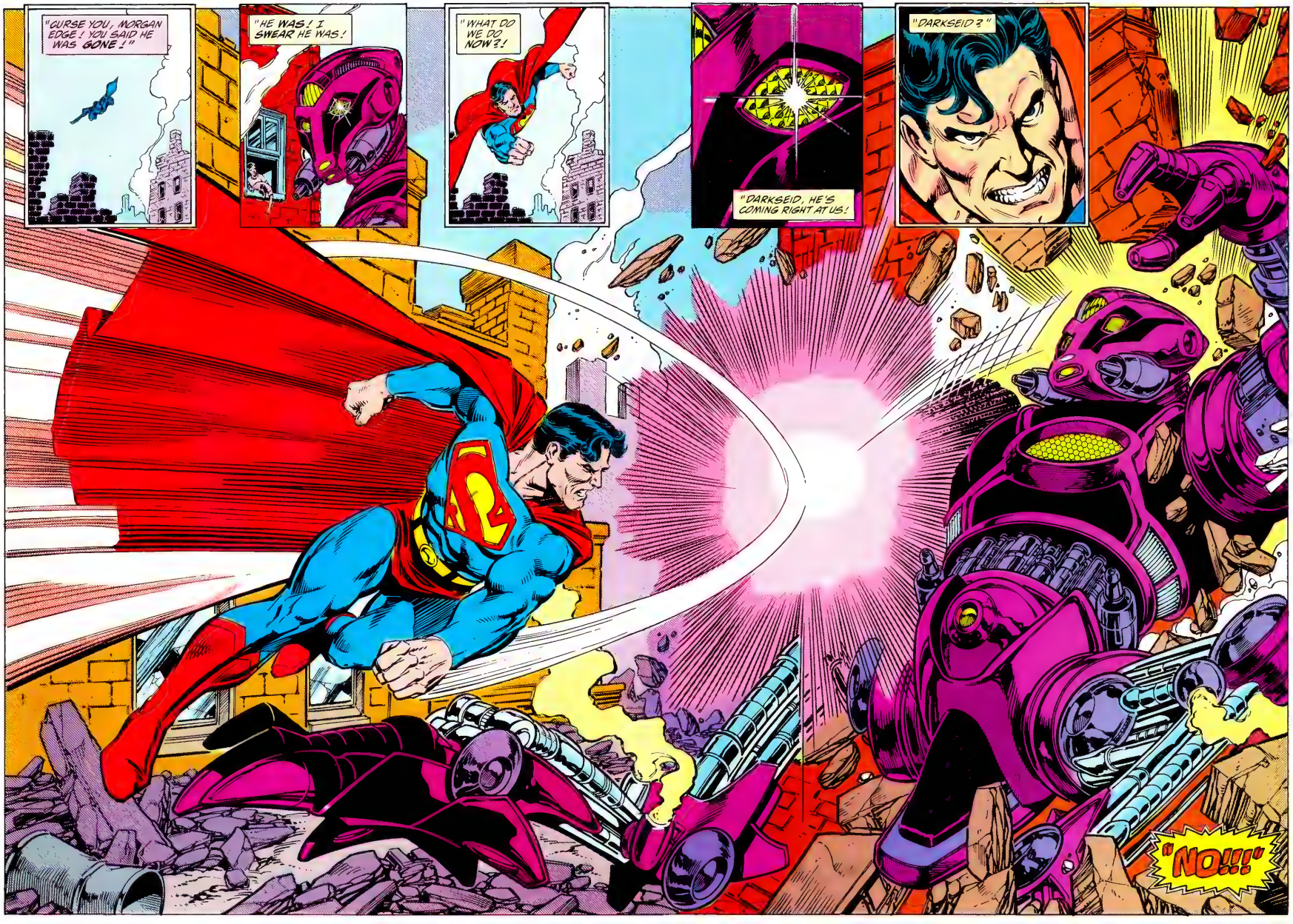

OKAY. THE OLD CLERIC'S RAIMENT SEEMS TO HAVE PROTECTED IT FROM MY IMPROMPTU AERIAL CIRCUS.
I JUST HOPE THAT HIS FAITH IN ME WILL BE JUSTIFIED.
I HOPE I'LL BE ABLE TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF THE... ERADICATOR.
...MY ONLY LEGACY TO KRYPTON.
ERADICATOR... THAT'S WHAT THE OLD CLERIC CALLED IT.
"ACCORDING TO HIM, WHILE IT WAS CREATED PRIMARILY AS A WEAPON, IT DEVELOPED INTO SOMETHING... ELSE.
"EVEN HE DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT.
"ALL I KNOW IS THAT HE SAID I WAS THE ANSWER TO HIS CENTURIES-OLD PRAYER. AND THAT THE RELIC HAD FINALLY BEEN RETURNED TO THE BLOODLINE FROM WHICH IT WAS STOLEN."
HE HAD ALL BUT GIVEN UP HOPE. KRYPTON WAS DEAD. THEY WERE ALL DEAD.
EXCEPT FOR ME.
HE BELIEVED IT WAS NO COINCIDENCE THAT THE ERADICATOR RESEMBLED THE MATRIX POD THAT BROUGHT ME TO EARTH.
I WAS PREDESTINED TO RETRIEVE IT, AND SOLVE ITS MYSTERY.
BUT, WILL THE KNOWLEDGE MY KRYPTONIAN FATHER BEQUEATHED ME BE ENOUGH?
MAYBE I SHOULD CALL PROFESSOR HAMILTON...
WELL, WE'LL SEE. FIRST THINGS FIRST.
A NICE HOT SHOWER. A VISIT WITH MY FOLKS.
THEN CLARK KENT, INTREPID REPORTER, BETTER GET BACK TO WORK.
HMM. WONDER WHY JIMMY SOUNDED SO SOMBER WHEN I MENTIONED CLARK'S NAME?
SO MANY QUESTIONS...

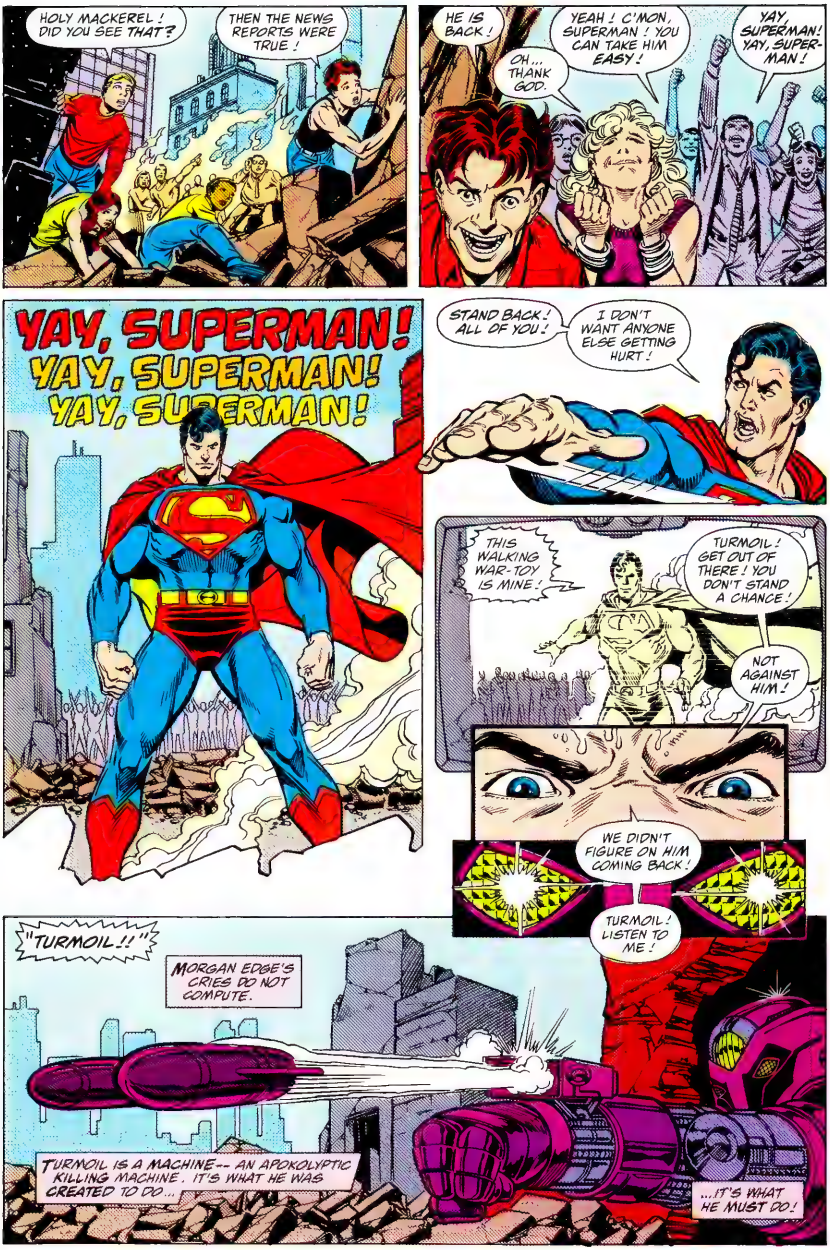

ALL RIGHT, PEOPLE, IF WE MOVE IT WE MAY YET MAKE THE NIGHT OWL EDITION!
OLSEN, GET THE WATCH, THEN GET THAT FILM TO THE LAB!
GOOD. THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO SHINE, KIDDO.
CAT, YOU UP TO A REPORT ON THAT ROBOT DEAL?
KENT? HOW ABOUT YOU? READY TO GET BACK TO WORK?
UM... WELL, SIR... I... UHH...
WONDERFUL! MY STAR REPORTER -- STILL WALKING AROUND LIKE SOME BLASTED ZOMBIE!
WHERE IN BLAZES IS LOIS LANE?!
LOIS? NO...
KENT -- CLARK -- I APPRECIATE YOUR DEDICATION BUT...
...AS YOUR FRIEND, I THINK YOU NEED A FEW MORE DAYS OFF.
AND, AS YOUR BOSS, I ORDER YOU TO TAKE THEM. UNDERSTAND?
NOW GO ON. GET OUT OF HERE.
C'MON, MR. KENT. THE CHIEF'S RIGHT. I'LL WALK YOU TO THE DOOR.
MR. WHITE... HATES ME...
HUH? BOY, YOU DO NEED A REST!
GO HOME, MR. KENT. THAT'S WHERE YOU BELONG RIGHT NOW.
YES... HOME...
LOIS! I CAN BARELY MAKE YOU OUT! WHAT IS IT?
CAT? IS THAT MS. LANE? THE CHIEF...
SHH, JIMMY! I CAN'T...
LOIS... I'M GETTING A LOT OF INTERFERENCE FROM YOUR END! WHERE ARE YOU?
CAT...THERE'S A HUGE MACHINE... A ROBOT...
THE ROBOT?! NO, LOIS, IT'S INTERGANG--
--EDGE'S BEHIND THAT MONSTER!
PLEASE, CAT, I'M AT THE PIER. GANGBUSTER IS...
LOIS?
DEAR LORD...
LOIS!!


BE IT EVER SO HUMBLE... THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE EARTH...
AAHHHHH... NOW, THIS IS MORE LIKE IT.
IT'S STRANGE-- THAT IT'S ALWAYS THE LITTLE THINGS YOU MISS.
THE FEELING OF HOT WATER SPRAYING ON YOUR FACE--THE SMELL OF SOAP.
MAN, I COULD STAY HERE FOREV--
HUH?!
ZEEEEEE
JIMMY'S SIGNAL WATCH!
BOY, HE SURE DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME!
STILL, JIMMY WOULD NEVER USE THAT SONIC FREQUENCY UNLESS IT WERE A REAL EMERGENCY...
UNLESS IT REALLY DID LOOK LIKE A JOB...
...FOR SUPERMAN!

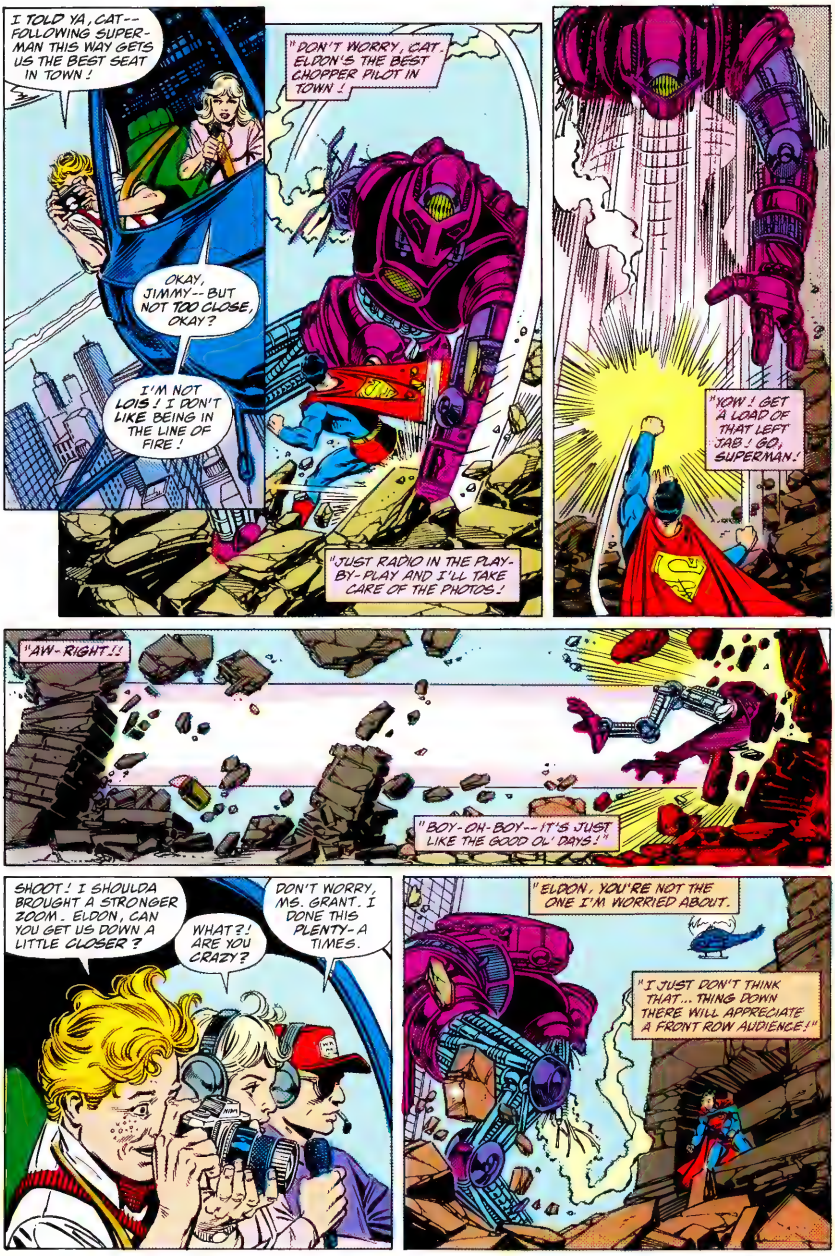
AS THE MAN OF TOMORROW ANSWERS THE CALL TO SERVICE...
...DEEP WITHIN THE DARKNESS OF TOPPLED CONCRETE AND STEEL, BENEATH THE RUBBLE WHICH WAS ONCE THE EDGEWATER WAREHOUSE GARAGE...
OHHHH.
...A BROKEN AND BATTERED LOIS LANE STRUGGLES PAINFULLY BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS.
GOD, THAT WAS A CLOSE ONE.
BUT I HAD TO TRY THE CAR PHONE... IT WAS OUR ONLY HOPE...
;UNNNH; I WAS LUCKY THAT TIME. I THINK I ONLY BROKE MY ARM.
YEAH, LOIS ...LUCKY.
THAT LAST CAVE-IN'S TOTALLY BLOCKED OUR ONLY WAY OUT...
GOT TO GET BACK TO JOSE.
I JUST PRAY THAT LAST SHOCKWAVE DIDN'T...
JOSE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
NO... EVERYTHING HURTS SO BAD.
OH, GOD... I I CAN'T GO THROUGH THIS AGAIN...
PLEASE, JOSE...
I-I GOT THROUGH TO CAT. HELP IS ON THE WAY.
YOU'RE A LOUSY LIAR, LOIS.
I-I DESERVE THIS ...I GUESS...
I SHOULD ...HAVE... LISTENED ;:
HE'S PASSED OUT AGAIN. POOR JOSE, HE...
OH, NO. THE TREMORS.
THAT MONSTER'S ATTACKING AGAIN!

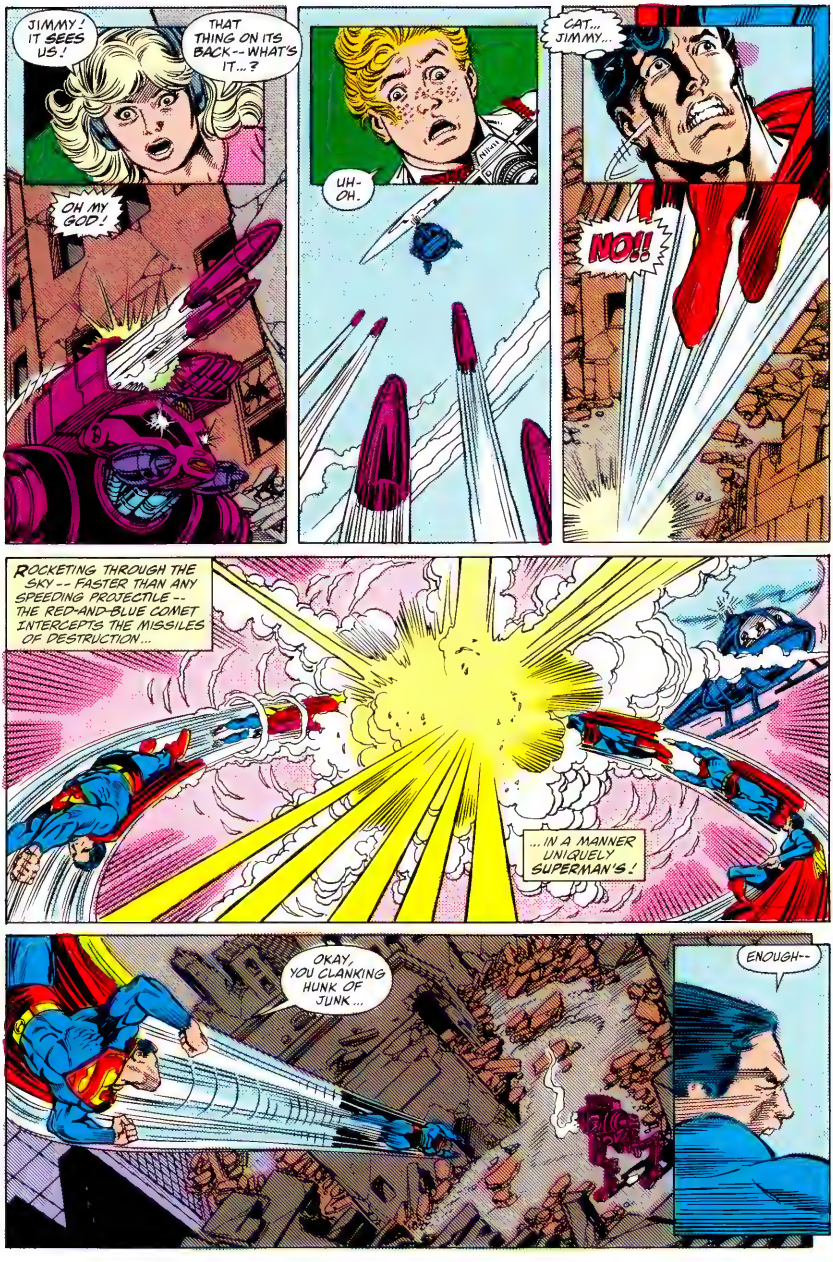
THE UNMISTAKABLE RUMBLINGS OF RAW DEVASTATION -- OF UNBRIDLED TERROR--
--EVEN FROM A QUARTER MILE UNDERGROUND... LOIS CAN RECOGNIZE IT.
METROPOLIS HARBOR. A PIER UNDER SIEGE.
FRANTIC MASSES, SCAMPERING TO ESCAPE THE APOCALYPTIC DELUGE--
--THE POUNDING, BURNING TORRENTS OF DEATH!
"NO!
"THIS IS GOING TOO FAR! THE THING'S OUT OF CONTROL!
"THIS WASN'T THE WAY I PLANNED IT!
"NO, DAMMIT! NOT THE WATER TOWER!
"THERE'S NO REASON..."
BLAST YOU, DARKSEID! WHY WON'T THAT MONSTER RESPOND TO MY COMMANDS?!
CEASE YOUR CONFOUNDED WHINING, EDGE.
YOU WANTED A VEHICLE OF PURE DESTRUCTION... YOU WANTED TURMOIL!
AM I TO BLAME BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE THE COMPETENCE TO CONTROL IT?
BUT, THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE ANY-THING LEFT!
IT'S DESTROYING EVERYTHING!
THEN FROM THE CRUMBLED RUINS OF METROPOLIS WE SHALL BUILD--!
WAIT! ON THE VIEWSCREEN! WHAT...?
OH... NO.

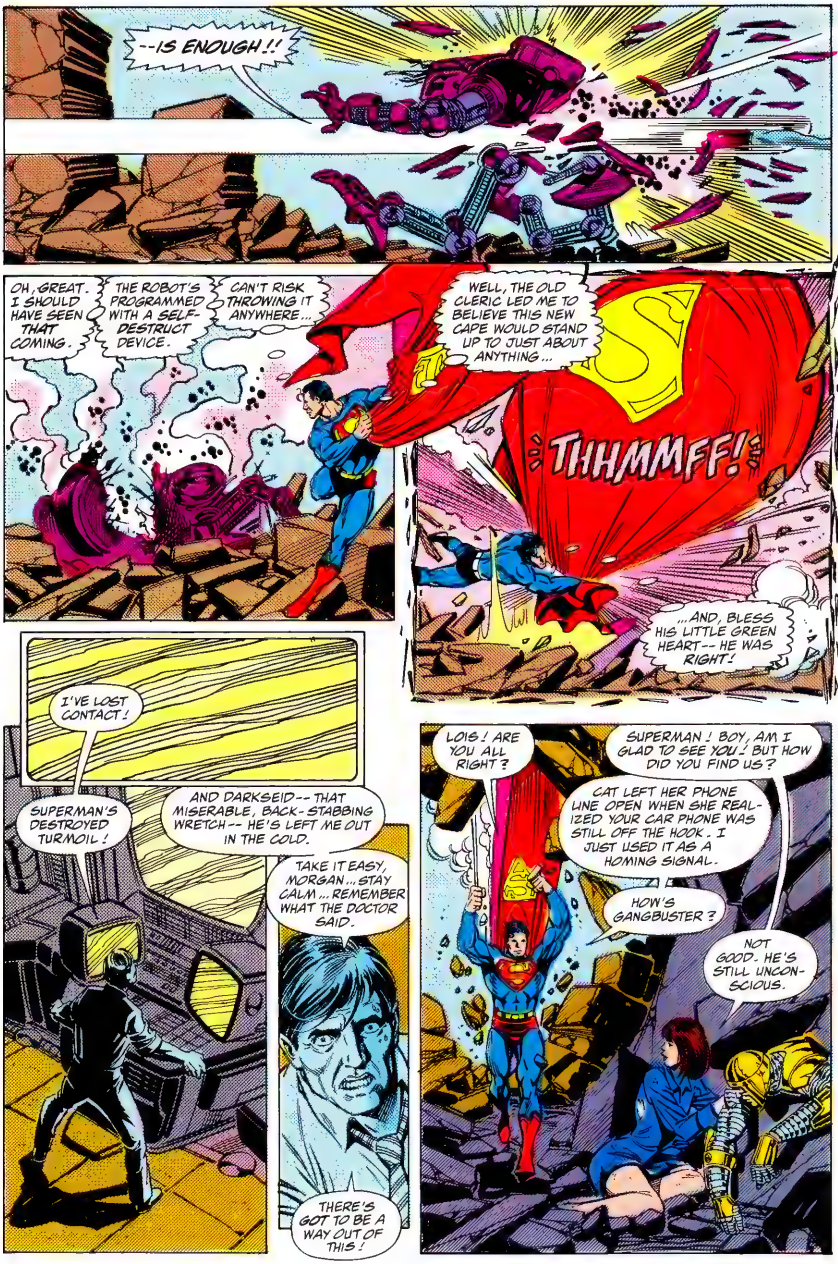

"CURSE YOU, MORGAN EDGE! YOU SAID HE WAS GONE!"
"HE WAS! I SWEAR HE WAS!
"WHAT DO WE DO NOW?!
"DARKSEID, HE'S COMING RIGHT AT US!
"DARKSEID?"
"NO!!!"


HOLY MACKEREL! DID YOU SEE THAT?
THEN THE NEWS REPORTS WERE TRUE!
HE IS BACK!
OH... THANK GOD.
YEAH! C'MON, SUPERMAN! YOU CAN TAKE HIM EASY!
YAY, SUPERMAN! YAY, SUPER-MAN!
YAY, SUPERMAN!
YAY, SUPERMAN!
YAY, SUPERMAN!
STAND BACK! ALL OF YOU!
I DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE GETTING HURT!
THIS WALKING WAR-TOY IS MINE!
TURMOIL! GET OUT OF THERE! YOU DON'T STAND A CHANCE!
NOT AGAINST HIM!
WE DIDN'T FIGURE ON HIM COMING BACK!
TURMOIL! LISTEN TO ME!
"TURMOIL!!"
MORGAN EDGE'S CRIES DO NOT COMPUTE.
TURMOIL IS A MACHINE-- AN APOKOLYPTIC KILLING MACHINE. IT'S WHAT HE WAS CREATED TO DO...
...IT'S WHAT HE MUST DO!

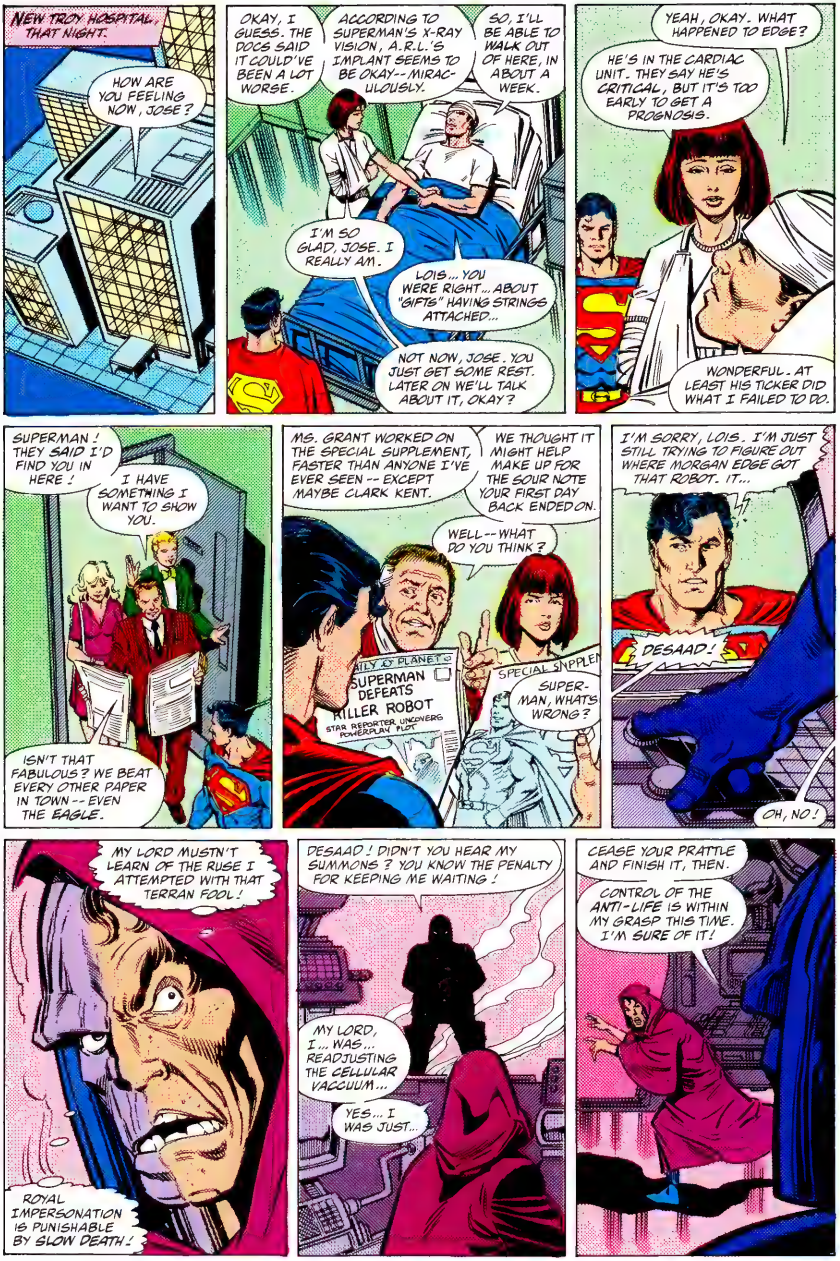
BA-THOOM
WHEW! NOT BAD... THOUGH I'VE CERTAINLY FACED A LOT WORSE.
EVEN SO, CLARK, OL' BOY --THERE'S NO NEED TO JUST STAND HERE AND TAKE THIS ABUSE.
MY X-RAY VISION'S ESTABLISHED THAT THE THING'S NOT HUMAN...
...SO I HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT DOING THIS.
STEEL-BLUE EYES REDDEN WITH FIRE...
...AND A CONCENTRATED BEAM OF EXTREME HEAT DISCHARGES FROM KRYPTONIAN ORBS...
K-THOOM!!
WOW-EEE! THIS IS GREAT!
THIS IS ABSOLUTELY AWESOME!

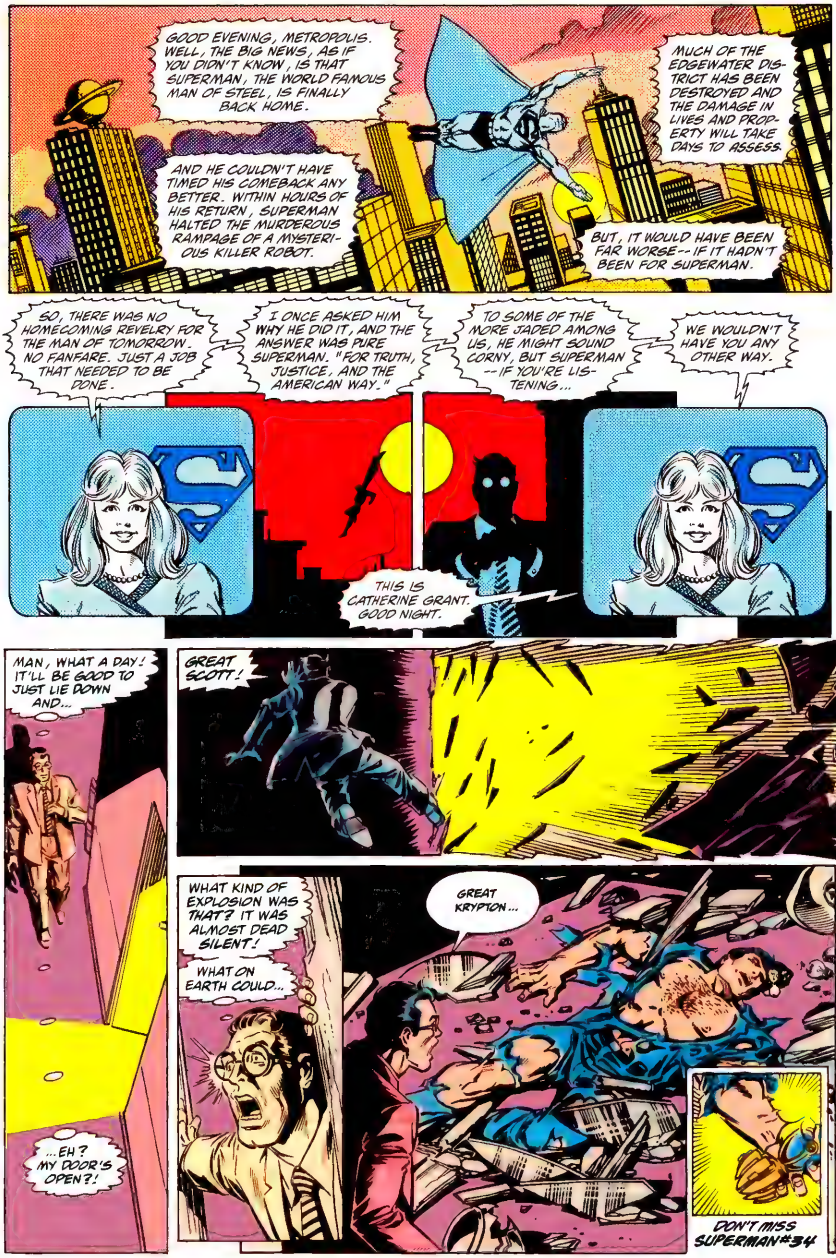

I TOLD YA, CAT-- FOLLOWING SUPERMAN THIS WAY GETS US THE BEST SEAT IN TOWN!
"DON'T WORRY, CAT. ELDON'S THE BEST CHOPPER PILOT IN TOWN!
OKAY, JIMMY-- BUT NOT TOO CLOSE, OKAY?
I'M NOT LOIS! I DON'T LIKE BEING IN THE LINE OF FIRE!
"JUST RADIO IN THE PLAY-BY-PLAY AND I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE PHOTOS!
"YOW! GET A LOAD OF THAT LEFT JAB! GO, SUPERMAN!
"AW-RIGHT!!
"BOY-OH-BOY-- IT'S JUST LIKE THE GOOD OL' DAYS!"
SHOOT! I SHOULDA BROUGHT A STRONGER ZOOM. ELDON, CAN YOU GET US DOWN A LITTLE CLOSER?
WHAT?! ARE YOU CRAZY?
DON'T WORRY, MS. GRANT. I DONE THIS PLENTY-A TIMES.
"ELDON, YOU'RE NOT THE ONE I'M WORRIED ABOUT.
"I JUST DON'T THINK THAT... THING DOWN THERE WILL APPRECIATE A FRONT ROW AUDIENCE!"


JIMMY! IT SEES US!
THAT THING ON ITS BACK--WHAT'S IT...?
OH MY GOD!
UH-OH.
CAT... JIMMY...
NO!!
ROCKETING THROUGH THE SKY--FASTER THAN ANY SPEEDING PROJECTILE--THE RED-AND-BLUE COMET INTERCEPTS THE MISSILES OF DESTRUCTION...
...IN A MANNER UNIQUELY SUPERMAN'S!
OKAY, YOU CLANKING HUNK OF JUNK...
ENOUGH--


--IS ENOUGH!!
OH, GREAT. I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THAT COMING.
THE ROBOT'S PROGRAMMED WITH A SELF-DESTRUCT DEVICE.
CAN'T RISK THROWING IT ANYWHERE...
WELL, THE OLD CLERIC LED ME TO BELIEVE THIS NEW CAPE WOULD STAND UP TO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING...
THHMMFF!
...AND, BLESS HIS LITTLE GREEN HEART-- HE WAS RIGHT!
I'VE LOST CONTACT!
SUPERMAN'S DESTROYED TURMOIL!
AND DARKSEID-- THAT MISERABLE, BACK-STABBING WRETCH -- HE'S LEFT ME OUT IN THE COLD.
TAKE IT EASY, MORGAN... STAY CALM... REMEMBER WHAT THE DOCTOR SAID.
THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY OUT OF THIS!
LOIS! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
SUPERMAN! BOY, AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU! BUT HOW DID YOU FIND US?
CAT LEFT HER PHONE LINE OPEN WHEN SHE REALIZED YOUR CAR PHONE WAS STILL OFF THE HOOK. I JUST USED IT AS A HOMING SIGNAL.
HOW'S GANGBUSTER?
NOT GOOD. HE'S STILL UNCONSCIOUS.

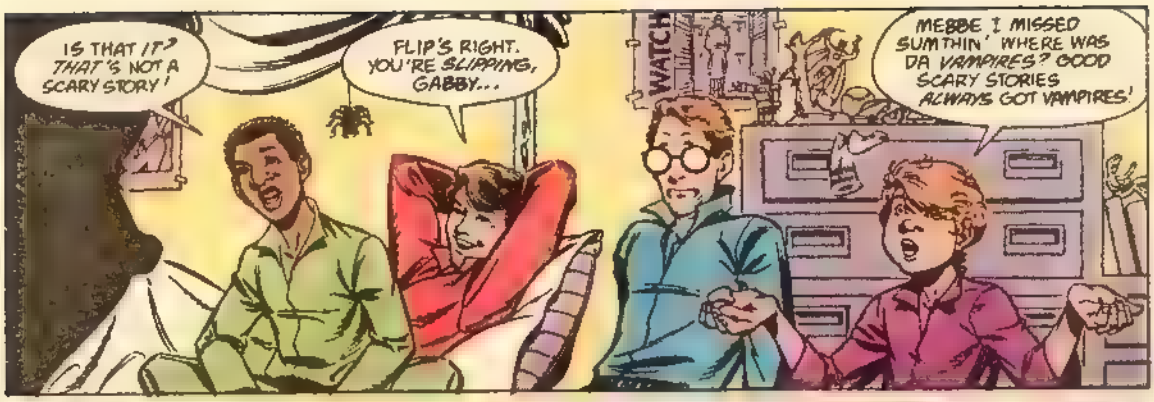
FIRST THINGS FIRST, THEN. YOU PULL HIM OUT WHILE I GET THIS WALL OFF HIM.
;UNGH; --GOT HIM.
I CAN SEE SOME INTERNAL INJURIES, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK TOO...
WAIT A MINUTE--THERE'S SOME KIND OF TINY MACHINE INSIDE HIS...
YES-- I KNOW. I'LL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU LATER.
BUT, WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOUR ARM--
I'LL BE FINE, SUPERMAN, REALLY.
CAT SAID INTERGANG AND MORGAN EDGE WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS.
EDGE?
BTHAM!
EDGE-- YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR THIS TIME.
NO! KEEP AWAY FROM ME!
LIKE HELL I WILL.
YOUR ROBOT HURT AND KILLED A LOT OF INNOCENT PEOPLE TODAY, EDGE.
AND I INTEND TO FIND OUT WHY --AND HOW.
THAT THING WAS WAY BEYOND YOUR CAPABILITIES--YOU MUST HAVE HAD HELP.
WHO WAS IT, EDGE? TALK FAST, OR...
YES-- I'LL TELL YOU -- THAT MONSTER BETRAYED ME! WHAT ALLEGIANCE DO I... I...
EDGE? WHAT'S WRONG?
NO... HELP... I...
EDGE!
SUPERMAN, WHAT HAPPENED?
BLAST IT ALL!
HE'S HAD A HEART ATTACK!

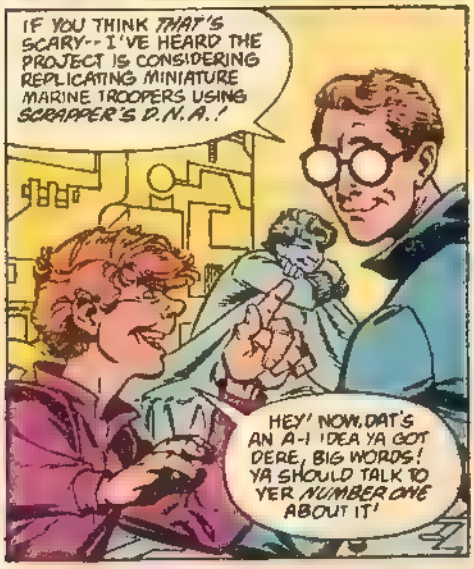

NEW TROY HOSPITAL, THAT NIGHT.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING NOW, JOSE?
OKAY, I GUESS. THE DOCS SAID IT COULD'VE BEEN A LOT WORSE.
ACCORDING TO SUPERMAN'S X-RAY VISION, A.R.L.'S IMPLANT SEEMS TO BE OKAY--MIRACULOUSLY.
SO, I'LL BE ABLE TO WALK OUT OF HERE, IN ABOUT A WEEK.
I'M SO GLAD, JOSE. I REALLY AM.
LOIS... YOU WERE RIGHT... ABOUT "GIFTS" HAVING STRINGS ATTACHED...
NOT NOW, JOSE. YOU JUST GET SOME REST. LATER ON WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT, OKAY?
YEAH, OKAY. WHAT HAPPENED TO EDGE?
HE'S IN THE CARDIAC UNIT. THEY SAY HE'S CRITICAL, BUT IT'S TOO EARLY TO GET A PROGNOSIS.
WONDERFUL. AT LEAST HIS TICKER DID WHAT I FAILED TO DO.
SUPERMAN! THEY SAID I'D FIND YOU IN HERE!
I HAVE SOMETHING I WANT TO SHOW YOU.
ISN'T THAT FABULOUS? WE BEAT EVERY OTHER PAPER IN TOWN -- EVEN THE EAGLE.
MS. GRANT WORKED ON THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT, FASTER THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER SEEN -- EXCEPT MAYBE CLARK KENT.
WE THOUGHT IT MIGHT HELP MAKE UP FOR THE SOUR NOTE YOUR FIRST DAY BACK ENDED ON.
WELL--WHAT DO YOU THINK?
SUPERMAN DEFEATS KILLER ROBOT
STAR REPORTER UNCOVERS POWERPLAY PLOT
SPECIAL SUPPLEM
SUPER-MAN, WHAT'S WRONG?
I'M SORRY, LOIS. I'M JUST STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHERE MORGAN EDGE GOT THAT ROBOT. IT...
DESAAD!
OH, NO!
MY LORD MUSTN'T LEARN OF THE RUSE I ATTEMPTED WITH THAT TERRAN FOOL!
ROYAL IMPERSONATION IS PUNISHABLE BY SLOW DEATH!
DESAAD! DIDN'T YOU HEAR MY SUMMONS? YOU KNOW THE PENALTY FOR KEEPING ME WAITING!
MY LORD, I... WAS... READJUSTING THE CELLULAR VACCUUM...
YES... I WAS JUST...
CEASE YOUR PRATTLE AND FINISH IT, THEN.
CONTROL OF THE ANTI-LIFE IS WITHIN MY GRASP THIS TIME. I'M SURE OF IT!


GOOD EVENING, METROPOLIS. WELL, THE BIG NEWS, AS IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW, IS THAT SUPERMAN, THE WORLD FAMOUS MAN OF STEEL, IS FINALLY BACK HOME.
AND HE COULDN'T HAVE TIMED HIS COMEBACK ANY BETTER. WITHIN HOURS OF HIS RETURN, SUPERMAN HALTED THE MURDEROUS RAMPAGE OF A MYSTERIOUS KILLER ROBOT.
MUCH OF THE EDGEWATER DISTRICT HAS BEEN DESTROYED AND THE DAMAGE IN LIVES AND PROPERTY WILL TAKE DAYS TO ASSESS.
BUT, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR WORSE -- IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR SUPERMAN.
SO, THERE WAS NO HOMECOMING REVELRY FOR THE MAN OF TOMORROW. NO FANFARE. JUST A JOB THAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.
I ONCE ASKED HIM WHY HE DID IT, AND THE ANSWER WAS PURE SUPERMAN. "FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND THE AMERICAN WAY."
TO SOME OF THE MORE JADED AMONG US, HE MIGHT SOUND CORNY, BUT SUPERMAN -- IF YOU'RE LISTENING...
WE WOULDN'T HAVE YOU ANY OTHER WAY.
THIS IS CATHERINE GRANT. GOOD NIGHT.
MAN, WHAT A DAY! IT'LL BE GOOD TO JUST LIE DOWN AND...
...EH? MY DOOR'S OPEN?!
GREAT SCOTT!
WHAT KIND OF EXPLOSION WAS THAT? IT WAS ALMOST DEAD SILENT!
WHAT ON EARTH COULD...
GREAT KRYPTON...
DON'T MISS SUPERMAN #34

BEFORE THEY BUILT THIS PLACE, THEY SENT PROBES -- TEAMS OF SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS DOWN HERE TO MAKE SURE IT WAS SAFE TO MAKE SURE THEY COULD ACTUALLY BUILD AN UNDERGROUND CITY IN THESE CAVERNS
"IT WAS A ROUTINE MISSION AT THE SMALLER DEEPER CAVES. AS EXPECTED, THE TEAM REPORTED THESE AREAS TO BE TOTALLY UNLIVABLE
"THEN, AT TWO THOUSAND FEET DEEP PROBE SIX DISCOVERED A STRANGE RISE IN TERRESTRIAL LIFE
"DID YOU EVER HEAR ABOUT PROBE SIX?"
"NO, OF COURSE NOT. THEY DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT PROBE SIX
"THINGS HAPPENED FAST AFTER THAT, AND NOT EVERYONE AGREES ON THE DETAILS.
"ONE THING'S FOR SURE. PROBE SIX RADIOED TO SURFACE WITH AMAZING NEWS. THEY SPOKE OF PRIMITIVE SWAMPS... A HUGE UNDERGROUND WORLD FILLED WITH THINGS NOT SEEN SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME... OR BEFORE!
the NEWSBOY LEGION
SECRETS OF DR. CADMUS D.N.A. PROJECT
Story and Art by KARL KESEL
Colored by JOHN COSTANZA
Lettered by TOM ZIUKO
Edited by WADE and ELURY
Based on a Idea Created by JACK KIRBY
"IN A STORY TAKES PLACE BEFORE THE EVENTS OF SUPERMAN #30

"THEY STARTED PHOTOGRAPHING IMMEDIATELY. IT WAS AN ASTOUNDING JUNGLE OF BREATH-TAKING BEAUTY
AND LURKING DANGER!
IN THE U.S. GOVT. REPORTS SUDDENLY TURNED DESPERATE. THEY PLEADED FOR WEAPONS, AMMUNITION, AND MILITARY BACK UP.
"THEY HAD A SMALL AMOUNT OF DYNAMITE WITH THEM THAT THEY WERE FORCED TO WIRE AS THEIR ONLY MEANS OF DEFENSE
PROBE SIX WAS RUSHED BY MYSTERIOUS ATTACKERS. THE DYNAMITE WAS USED.
"THAT WAS THE LAST REPORT FROM PROBE SIX. THEY WERE NEVER FOUND.
NEITHER WAS THEIR [illegible] WORLD.
"YEARS LATER A FILM CANISTER LABELED PROBE S.I. WAS FOUND [illegible] OF THE FILM'S FRAMES WERE BLURRED AND UNREADABLE
EXCEPT ONE.
...IT WAS A PICTURE OF SOMETHING VAGUELY MAN-LIKE...
...BUT SOMETHING NOT HUMAN AT ALL!


IS THAT IT? THAT'S NOT A SCARY STORY!
FLIP'S RIGHT. YOU'RE SLIPPING, GABBY...
WATCH
MEBBE I MISSED SUMTHIN' WHERE WAS DA VAMPIRES? GOOD SCARY STORIES ALWAYS GOT VAMPIRES!


IF YOU THINK THAT'S SCARY-- I'VE HEARD THE PROJECT IS CONSIDERING REPLICATING MINIATURE MARINE TROOPERS USING SCRAPPER'S D.N.A.!
HEY! NOW, DAT'S AN A-1 IDEA YA GOT DERE, BIG WORDS! YA SHOULD TALK TO YER NUMBER ONE ABOUT IT!

WAIT-- I GOT ANOTHER! THERE'S THIS MAN OF LIVING METAL CALLED ADAM, AND HE--
SOMEBODY STOP HIM BEFORE HE TALKS AGAIN!
WUMP!

WE'RE WIT' YA, TOMMY!
NEWSBOY LEGION-- ATTACK!

WHAT'S GOING ON IN HERE?
IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT! YOU BOYS SHOULD BE ASLEEP!

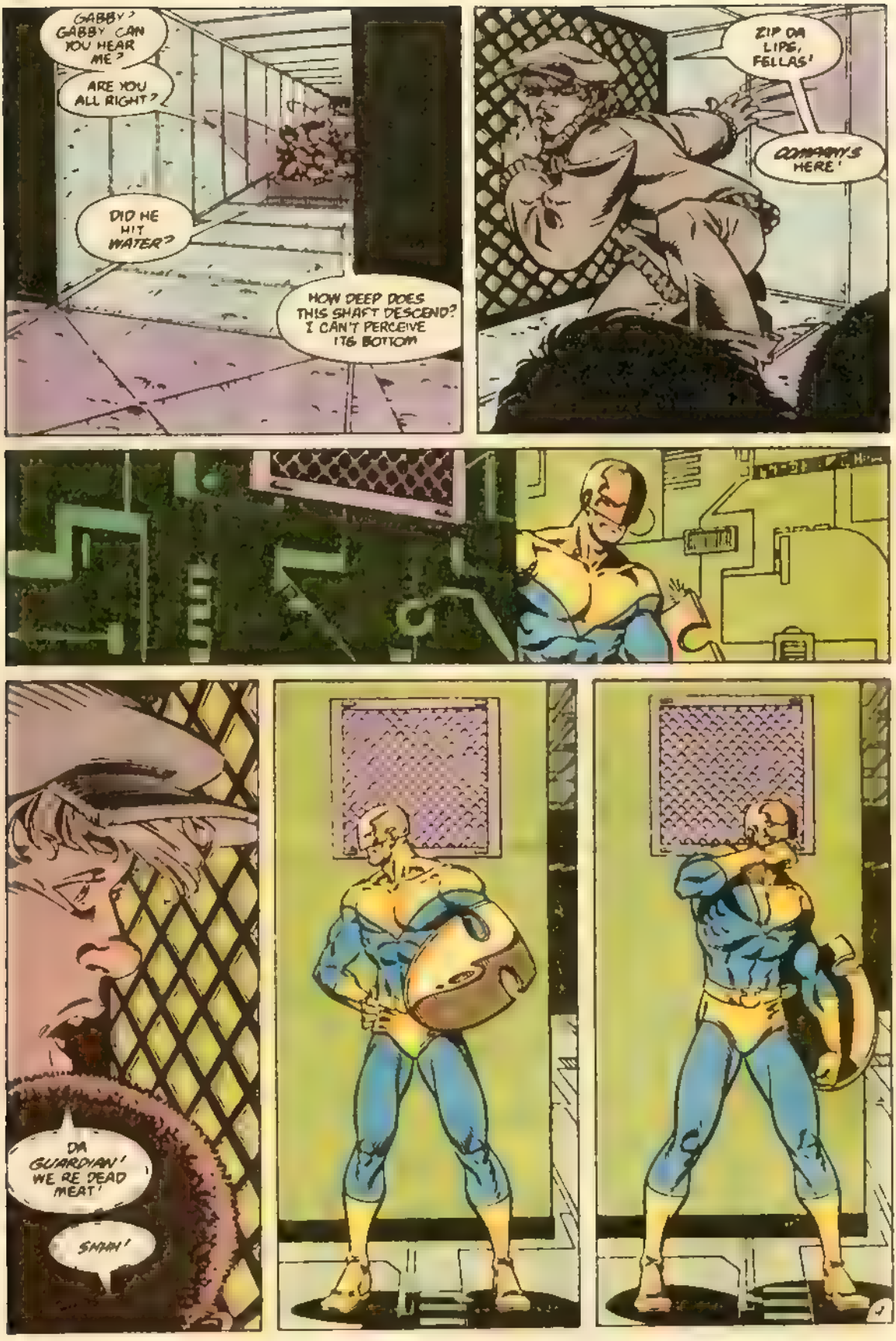
WELL, SEE, NUMBER ONE, WE
RIGHT! STUDYING ER... LITERATURE!
STUDYING
CHEMISTRY!
THE CHEMISTRY OF LITERATURE!
DON'T KID A KIDDER, BOYS. REMEMBER-- NOT ONLY WAS I THERE--I WAS YOU!
CLIC!
I PROPOSE WE CONDUCT AN UNCHAPERONED TOUR OF THE FACILITIES .. STRICTLY FOR OUR EDUCATIONAL ENLIGHTENMENT, OF COURSE
YOU MEAN SNEAK OUT AND EXPLORE?
WHAT WERE THEY UP TO, SCRAP?
AW NOT MUCH, YOU KNOW HOW BOYS ARE
YOU KNOW HOW WE WERE
THEY BRING BACK MEMORIES, DON'T THEY?
CIRCUMSTANCES NOTWITHSTANDING, I MUST ADMIT THAT I'M GLAD THEY'RE AROUND

SEEING LITTLE GABBY-- IT'S ALMOST LIKE HAVING MY OWN SON BACK
AND ME--I NEVER EVEN MARRIED. THE RIGHT GIRL JUST NEVER CAME ALONG.
TOMMY IS LIKE A MIRACLE FOR ME
I LOVE FLIP, TOO-- BUT ONE THING WORRIES ME
THERE'S SOME UNEXPLAINED BRAIN ACTIVITY THAT WORDS AND I CAN'T PIN DOWN
AND IT'S NOT JUST IN THE BOYS HARPER HAS IT, TOO IN FACT EVERY CLONE DOES
WE HAVEN'T A CLUE WHY IT EXISTS, OR WHAT ITS PURPOSE IS.
KINDA LIKE THESE TUNNELS YOU KNOW--THE REASON I CALLED THIS MEETIN'?
NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW WHO BUILT 'EM - OR WHY
THERE'S HUNDREDS OF MILES OF 'EM--AN' THEY AIN'T ON ANY OFFICIAL BLUE-PRINTS
JIM HARPER'S BEEN TRYING TO MAP 'EM FOR ME. SOME ARE DEAD ENDS SOME GO CLEAR TO METROPOLIS CONNECT WITH ITS SEWER SYSTEM
GOOD LORD! THEN IT'S POSSIBLE THAT SOME DETERMINED SOUL COULD FIND OUT ABOUT THE PROJECT!
YOU'RE BATTIN' 1000, WORDS
WE DO GOOD WORK DOWN HERE--INTELLIGENT, RESPONSIBLE WORK-- BUT D.N.A. RESEARCH IS SO TOUCHY WITH THE PUBLIC
SECRECY IS ESSENTIAL
CAN YOU IMAGINE IF THEY EVER FOUND OUT ABOUT DABNEY DONOVAN?
5

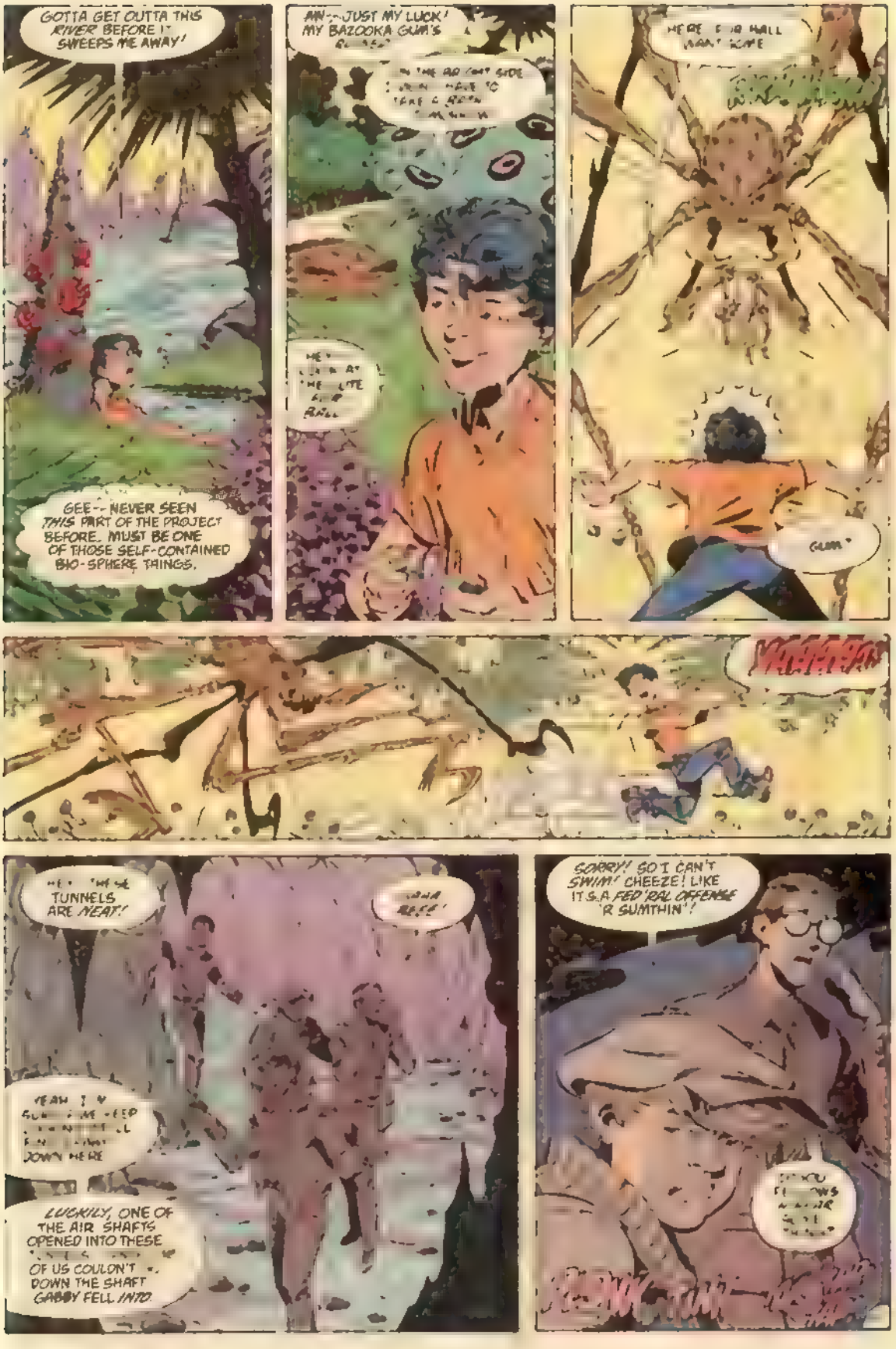
"DABNEY DONOVAN--THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL MAD SCIENTIST!"
DON'T YOU SEE--WITH THE D.N.A. CODE CRACKED, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!
FOUR-ARMED BEINGS! VAMPIRES! GIANT, GREEN JIMMY OLSENS!
ANYTHING WE CAN THINK OF, WE CAN CREATE!
"HE WAS CERTAINLY BRILLIANT, GABBY, BUT HE DIDN'T POSSESS ANY SCIENTIFIC ETHICS. HE EXPERIMENTED SIMPLY TO SEE WHAT WOULD RESULT.
"DUBBLEX--THE GENTLE, NOBLE MONSTER OF THE CADMUS PROJECT--WAS HIS CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT."
"YOU'RE RIGHT, 'WORDS. DOC DONOVAN NEVER FIGURED OUT THAT WE AIN'T IN THE MONSTER BUSINESS HERE.
"WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SHUT HIM DOWN.
"AN' I STILL THINK HE LET THE LAST ONE OUT ON PURPOSE.
"THAT D.N ALIEN WAS PAYBACK.
"IT WAS ALSO THE FIRST CASE OF ACCELERATED GROWTH HERE AT THE PROJECT, SCRAP DONOVAN CREATED THAT THING ALMOST INSTANTLY.
"BUT IT WASN'T PERFECTED. IT LITERALLY BURNED ITSELF OUT.
"AND DONOVAN... WELL, LIVE BY THE SWORD, DIE BY THE SWORD."
6

YOU MUST ADMIT, FLIP, IT WAS THANKS TO DONOVAN'S NOTES--AND THAT ALIEN--THAT YOU, TOM, AND I WERE ABLE TO PERFECT ACCELERATED GROWTH.
I'M ACTUALLY SURPRISED HE HADN'T FIGURED IT OUT.
IF NOT FOR SLEEZ!
FOR --
"...WHEN IT GETS DOWN TO IT, THEY'RE WORTH ALL THEIR TROUBLE."
THINK THERE'S ANY WAY WE COULD LET
NOT AT THIS JUNCTURE THIS IS MERELY AN OBSERVATION POINT.
CORRECT I'VE ALSO HEARD THAT THEY ARE LEADING THE RESEARCH

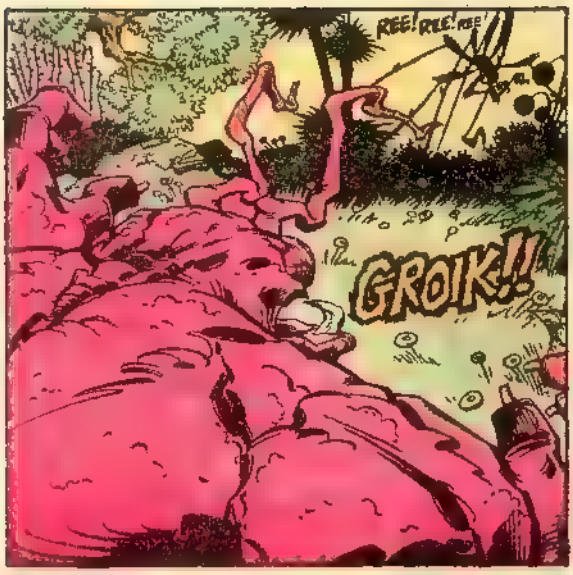
QUICK EVERYONE INTO THIS AIR SHAFT!
I CAN'T BE CAUGHT! I'M ALREADY GROUNDED FOR THE NEXT MONTH!
THAT'S NOTHIN'!! BIG WORDS IS ON TWO MONTHS PROBATION! CHARGES 'CAUSE HIS NUMBER ONE CAUGHT HIM TRYIN' TO CHANGE A WASHIN' MACHINE INTO A TELEPORT TUBE!
THAT WOULD HAVE WORKED, TOO!
QUIT YAKKIN' AN' START PACKIN'! I NEED SOME ELBOW ROOM HERE TA CAUSE DIS GRAFFITI OR WE'RE ALL HISTORY
HOLD ON, SCRAPPER THERE'S ANOTHER SHOT HERE THAT DROPS STRAIGHT DOWN!
SORRY, GIRLS, BUT I AIN'T GOT ALL DAY!
SHOVE!
CRASH!
BANG!
AAAAAAH!
OH, NO!
BONGG
KANG
KOOM
SPLASH!
8

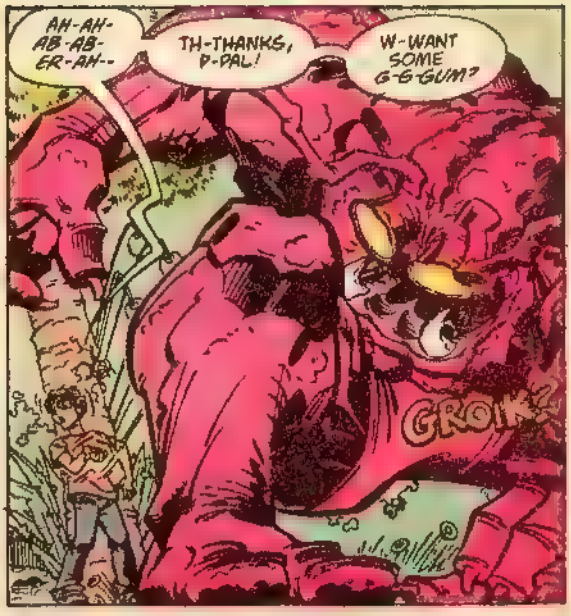

GABBY? GABBY CAN YOU HEAR ME?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
DID HE HIT WATER?
HOW DEEP DOES THIS SHAFT DESCEND? I CAN'T PERCEIVE ITS BOTTOM
ZIP DA LIPS, FELLAS!
COMPANY'S HERE!
DA GUARDIAN! WE'RE DEAD MEAT!
SHHH!

GULP!
HOW 'BOUT DEM APPLES? WE BAMBOOZLED DA GREAT GOLDEN GUARDIAN HIS-SELF!
IT BORDERS ON INCREDULITY!
HEY, I HATE TO BE A WET BLANKET, BUT SPEAKING OF WET...
"WE HAVE TO FIND GABBY!"
GLUG!
WH-WHERE AM I?
10

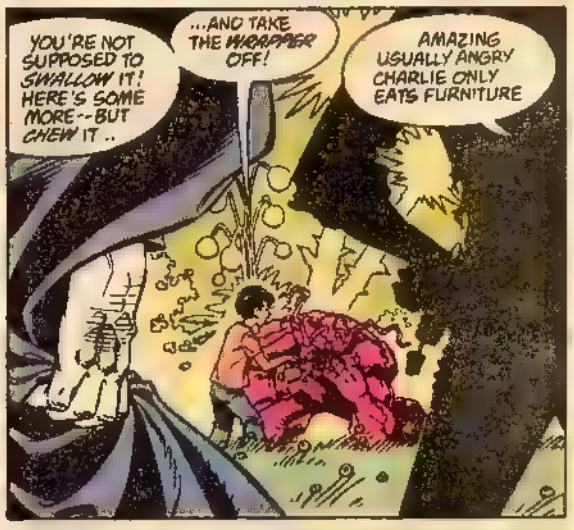

GOTTA GET OUTTA THIS RIVER BEFORE IT SWEEPS ME AWAY!
GEE-- NEVER SEEN THIS PART OF THE PROJECT BEFORE. MUST BE ONE OF THOSE SELF-CONTAINED BIO-SPHERE THINGS.
AW--JUST MY LUCK! MY BAZOOKA GUM'S
GUM!
YAHHHHAH
HEY! THESE TUNNELS ARE NEAT!
WOW A REEF!
SORRY! SO I CAN'T SWIM! CHEEZE! LIKE IT'S A FED'RAL OFFENSE 'R SUMTHIN'!

MEBBE IT'S DAT WATCHA-CALL LESS DEAD-NUMAN T'ING. YOU KNOW FROM PROBE SIX?
HEY--THAT'S NOT FUNNY!
HRAKK-IT-IT
WH-WHAT WAS THAT?
P-PERHAPS WE SHOULD GO B-BACK AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE.
GOOD IDEA BIG WORDS THIS WAY, RIGHT?
NAH! ME UNERRIN' SENSE O' DIRECTION TELLS ME DAT "OUT" IS DIS WAY!
GREAT, NOW ME JOE LOST! WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE IS DOWN HERE, AND--
YEEOWW!
YEEOWW!
GRROIKK!
2

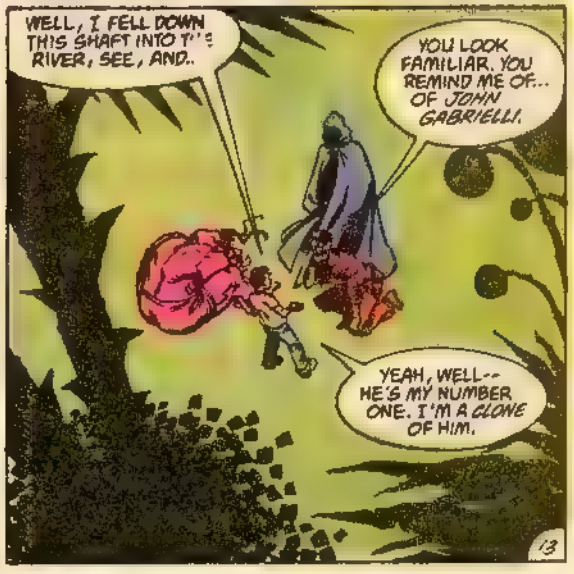

REE! REE! REE!
GROIK!!

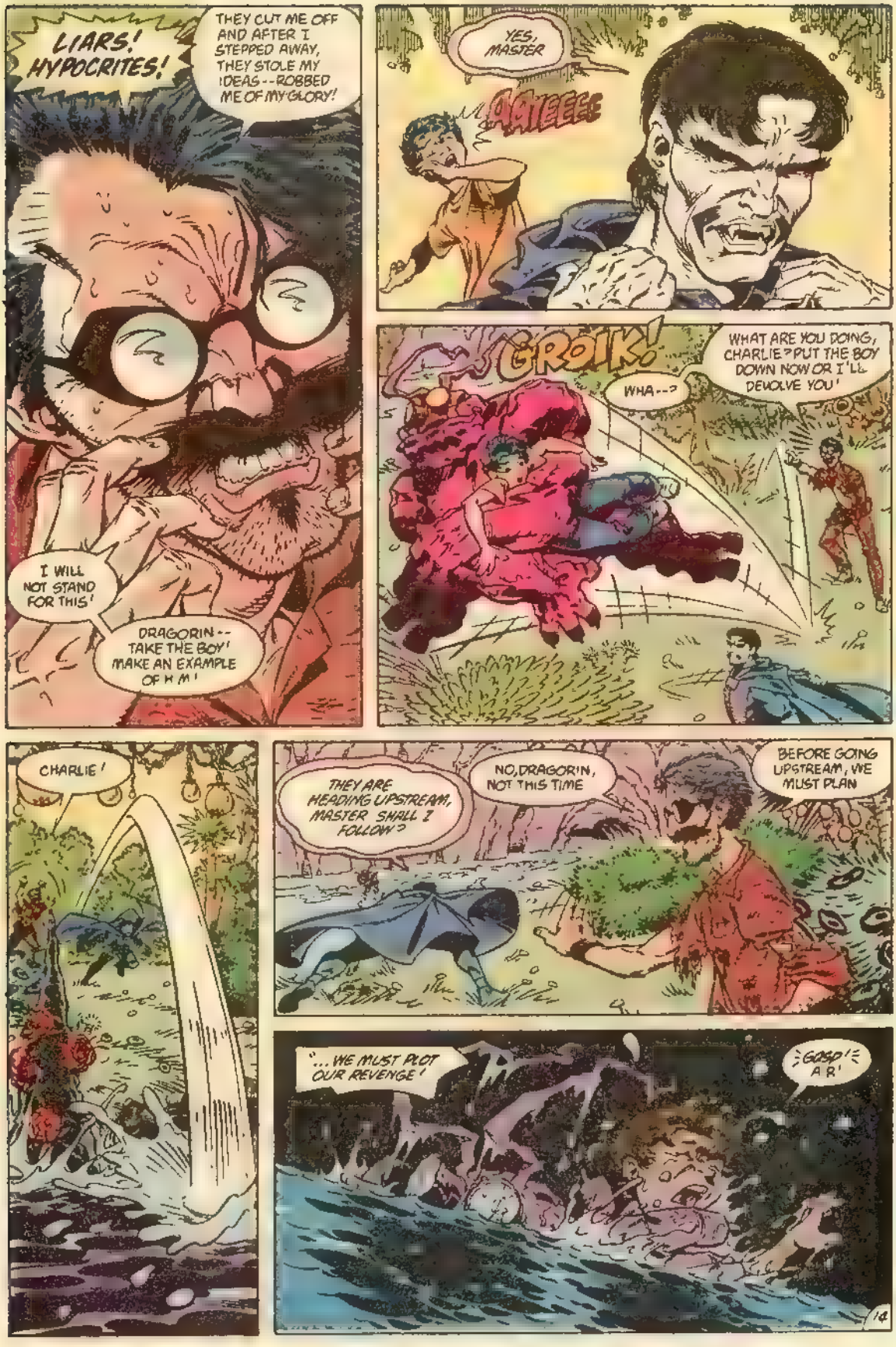

AH-AH-AB-AB-ER-AH--
TH-THANKS, P-PAL!
W-WANT SOME G-G-GUM?
GROIK

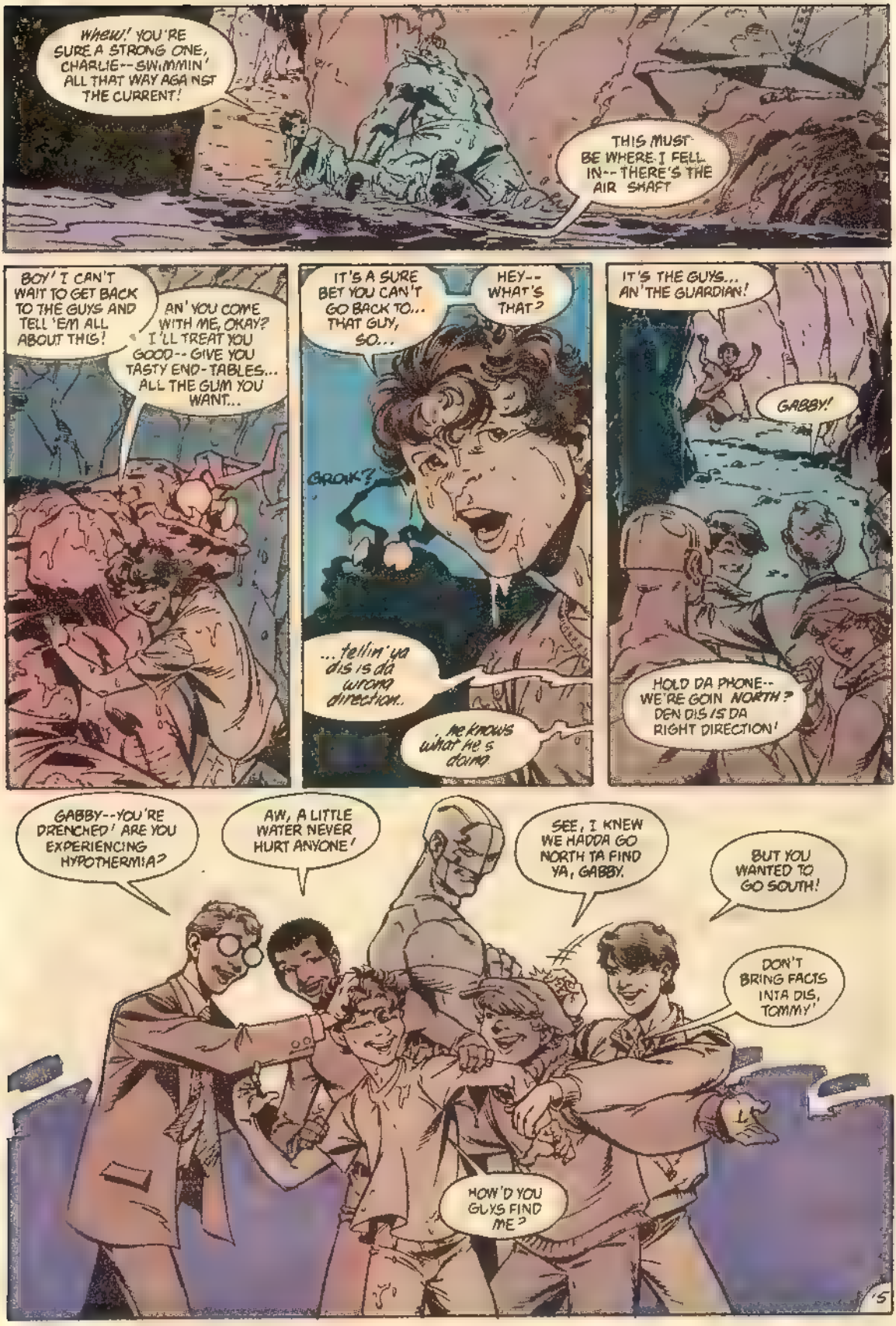
HEY--YOU LIKE IT, HUH?
CHOMP! CHOMP! CHOMP!
GROIK!! GROIK!!

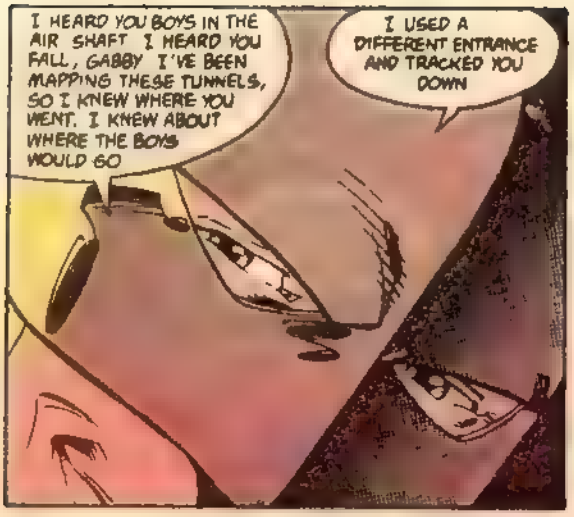

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO SWALLOW IT! HERE'S SOME MORE--BUT CHEW IT ..
...AND TAKE THE WRAPPER OFF!
AMAZING USUALLY ANGRY CHARLIE ONLY EATS FURNITURE

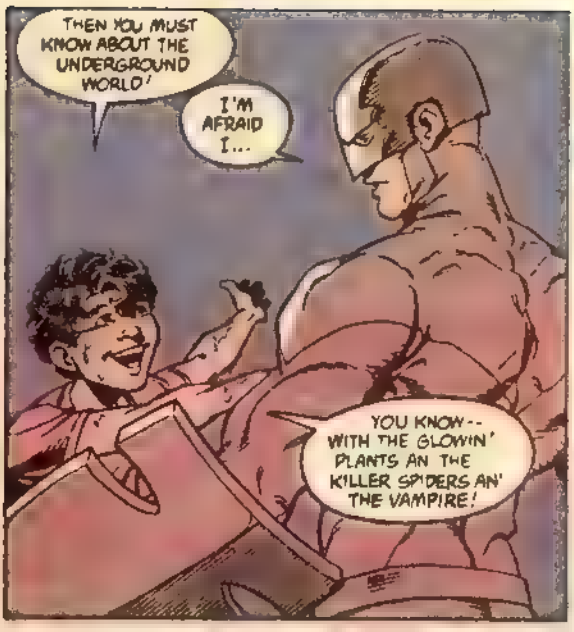
I SHOULD KNOW I CREATED HIM.
I CREATED EVERYTHING HERE THIS IS MY DOMAIN
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?


WELL, I FELL DOWN THIS SHAFT INTO T'' RIVER, SEE, AND..
YOU LOOK FAMILIAR. YOU REMIND ME OF... OF JOHN GABRIELLI.
YEAH, WELL-- HE'S MY NUMBER ONE. I'M A CLONE OF HIM.

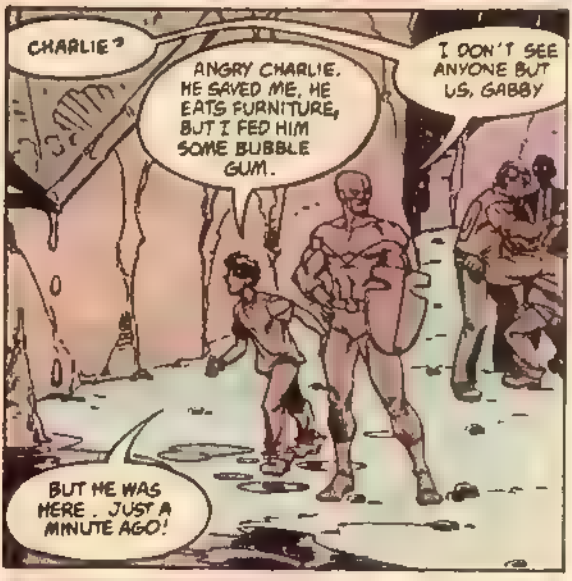

LIARS! HYPOCRITES!
THEY CUT ME OFF AND AFTER I STEPPED AWAY, THEY STOLE MY IDEAS--ROBBED ME OF MY GLORY!
I WILL NOT STAND FOR THIS!
DRAGORIN--TAKE THE BOY! MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF HIM!
YES, MASTER
AGHEEEE
GROIK!
WHA--?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, CHARLIE? PUT THE BOY DOWN NOW OR I'LL DEVOLVE YOU!
CHARLIE!
THEY ARE HEADING UPSTREAM, MASTER SHALL I FOLLOW?
NO, DRAGORIN, NOT THIS TIME
BEFORE GOING UPSTREAM, WE MUST PLAN
"...WE MUST PLOT OUR REVENGE!
;GASP!= AR!
14


WHEW! YOU'RE SURE A STRONG ONE, CHARLIE--SWIMMIN' ALL THAT WAY AGAINST THE CURRENT!
THIS MUST BE WHERE I FELL IN-- THERE'S THE AIR SHAFT
BOY! I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO THE GUYS AND TELL 'EM ALL ABOUT THIS!
AN' YOU COME WITH ME, OKAY? I'LL TREAT YOU GOOD-- GIVE YOU TASTY END-TABLES... ALL THE GUM YOU WANT...
IT'S A SURE BET YOU CAN'T GO BACK TO... THAT GUY, SO...
HEY-- WHAT'S THAT?
GROK?
...tellin' ya dis is da wrong direction.
He knows what he's doing.
IT'S THE GUYS... AN' THE GUARDIAN!
GABBY!
HOLD DA PHONE-- WE'RE GOIN NORTH? DEN DIS IS DA RIGHT DIRECTION!
GABBY--YOU'RE DRENCHED! ARE YOU EXPERIENCING HYPOTHERMIA?
AW, A LITTLE WATER NEVER HURT ANYONE!
SEE, I KNEW WE HADDA GO NORTH TA FIND YA, GABBY.
BUT YOU WANTED TO GO SOUTH!
DON'T BRING FACTS INTA DIS, TOMMY!
HOW'D YOU GUYS FIND ME?

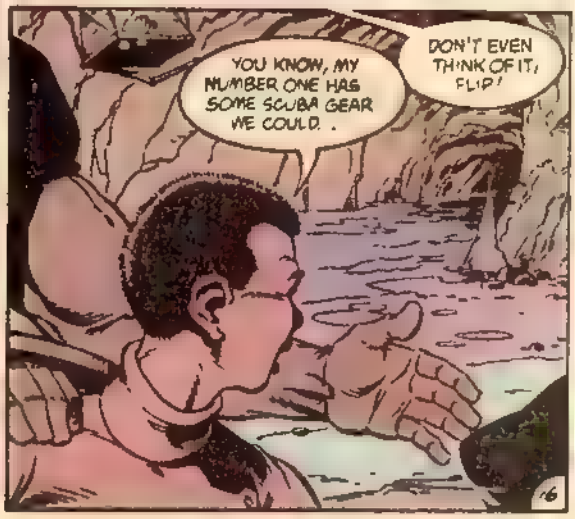

I HEARD YOU BOYS IN THE AIR SHAFT I HEARD YOU FALL, GABBY I'VE BEEN MAPPING THESE TUNNELS, SO I KNEW WHERE YOU WENT. I KNEW ABOUT WHERE THE BOYS WOULD GO
I USED A DIFFERENT ENTRANCE AND TRACKED YOU DOWN

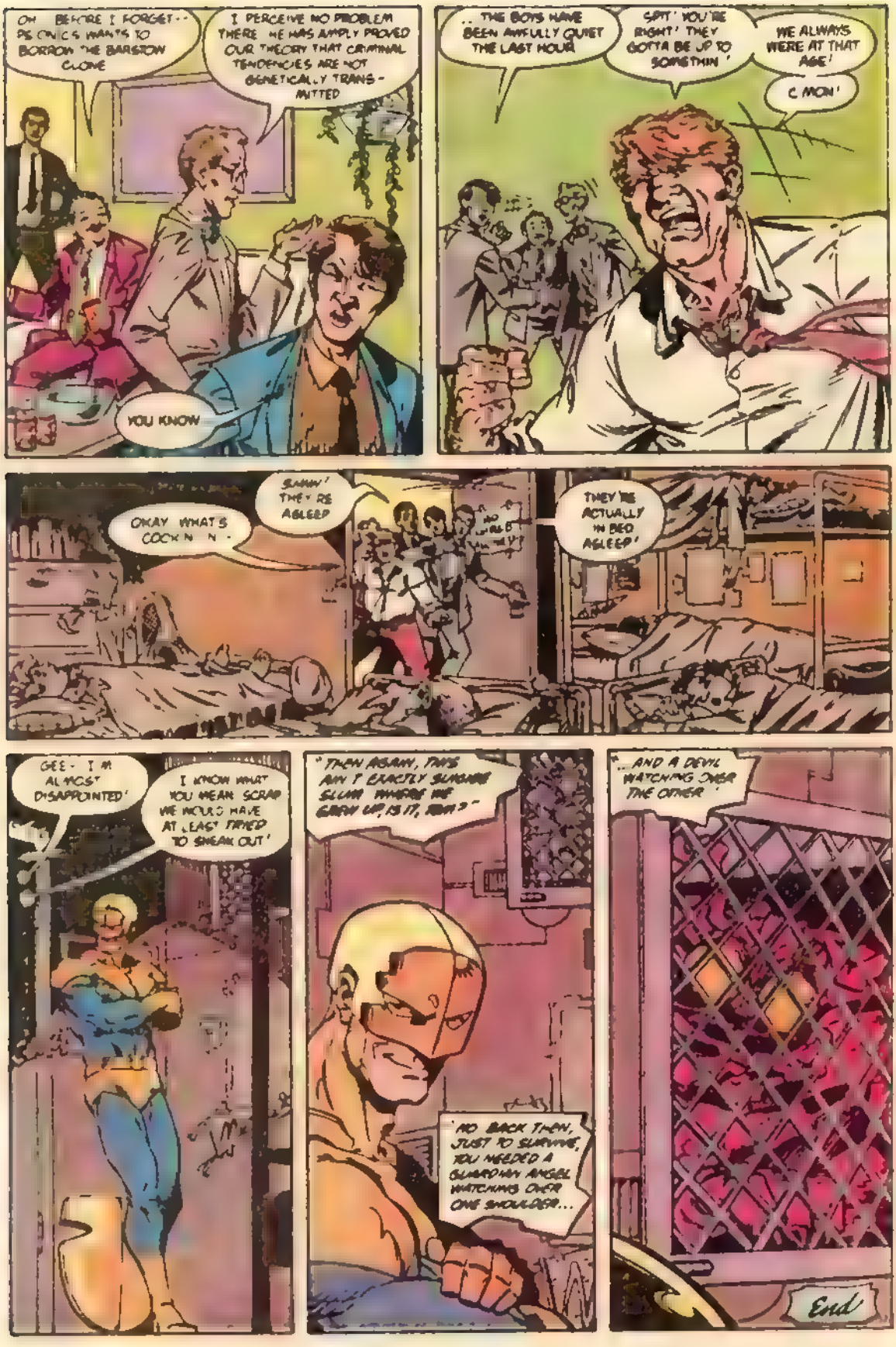

THEN YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND WORLD!
I'M AFRAID I...
YOU KNOW-- WITH THE GLOWIN' PLANTS AN THE K'ILLER SPIDERS AN' THE VAMPIRE!

OH NO! IT'S THE PROBE SIX STORY AGAIN!
ONLY DIS TIME WIT' VAMPIRES!
NO-- IT'S TRUE! IT'S DOWN THIS RIVER! CHARLIE IS PROOF!


CHARLIE?
ANGRY CHARLIE. HE SAVED ME, HE EATS FURNITURE, BUT I FED HIM SOME BUBBLE GUM.
I DON'T SEE ANYONE BUT US, GABBY
BUT HE WAS HERE. JUST A MINUTE AGO!

I THINK IT'S WAY PAST ALL YOUR BEDTIMES
AWWW...
COME ALONG, BOYS. YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH ADVENTURE FOR ONE NIGHT


YOU KNOW, MY NUMBER ONE HAS SOME SCUBA GEAR WE COULD..
DON'T EVEN THINK OF IT, FLIP!


OH BEFORE I FORGET-- PS CYNICS WANTS TO BORROW THE BARBION CLONE
I PERCEIVE NO PROBLEM THERE HE HAS AMPLY PROVED OUR THEORY THAT CRIMINAL TENDENCIES ARE NOT GENETICALLY TRANS-MITTED
YOU KNOW
.. THE BOYS HAVE BEEN AWFULLY QUIET THE LAST HOUR
SPIT' YOU'RE RIGHT' THEY GOTTA BE UP TO SOMETHIN'
WE ALWAYS WERE AT THAT AGE!
C MON'
OKAY WHAT'S COOKIN' -
SHHH' THEY'RE ASLEEP
THEY'RE ACTUALLY IN BED ASLEEP'
GEE- I'M ALMOST DISAPPOINTED'
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN SCRAP WE WOULD HAVE AT LEAST TRIED TO SNEAK OUT'
"THEN ASIAN, THIS AIN'T EXACTLY SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE WHERE WE GREW UP, IS IT, JOHN?--
NO BACK THEN, JUST TO SURVIVE, YOU NEEDED A GUARDIAN ANGEL WATCHING OVER ONE SHOULDER...
"... AND A DEVIL WATCHING OVER THE OTHER'
End

AS THE 1880'S DREW TO A CLOSE, LONDON'S BACKSTREETS PLAYED HOST TO A SCENE OF VIGILANTE JUSTICE.

WAAAAAA

HUSH, LITTLE ONE. I'LL NOT LET THEM TAKE YOU FROM ME!

THE CROWD SEEKS AN END TO A SERIES OF CHILD ABDUCTIONS THAT ARE OCCURRING IN THIS RUN-DOWN DISTRICT.

'E'S THE MONSTER WHO TRIED TO NAB MY LIT' 'L' PATTY!

'AT'S ALEISTER HOOK, FROM THE *CLINIC*.

IF *THIS* GUY HOOK'S A DOCTOR...

...IT'S NO WONDER THE POLICE 'AVEN'T ARRESTED HIM THEN!

'E WON'T BE *BUYIN'* US OFF!

MOMMY!

THE BLOODY FOOL'S RUN INTO THE OLD *CHAPEL*! WE'VE GOT HIM TRAPPED!

THIS WON'T HOLD THEM FOR LONG. THEY'VE COME TO TAKE YOU ALL AWAY FROM ME, *MY DARLINGS!*

THOMP

THUMP

'AVE WE DISPLEASED YOU, UNCLE?

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WE BROUGHT OUR THINGS TO THIS DESERTED PLACE LIKE YOU TOLD US!

AND LOOK AT ALL THE TREASURES WE NICKED FOR YOU, UNCLE!

UNCLE HOOK FRETS NOT OVER HIS BABIES, BUT OVER THOSE WHO WOULD MISUNDERSTAND 'IM -- THOSE OUTSIDE THE DOORS!

WHOEVER WORSHIPPED 'ERE MUST'VE 'AD FAITH IN YOU, MERCIFUL FATHER...

... PROTECT ME, AND MY DARLINGS-- AND I COMMEND MY SOUL UNTO THEE...

BLOODY 'ELL! 'EH'S DOIN' THE DEVIL'S WORK 'ERE!

HER RASH

REMOVE THE CHILDREN FROM THIS UNHOLY PLACE!

NO! DON'T HURT UNCLE!

HE'S CORRUPTED OUR LITTLE ONES, TURNED THEM AGAINST US!

HANGING'S TOO GOOD FOR 'IS LOT!

BURN 'IM!

YEAH. BURN 'IM AND THIS EVIL PLACE!

WITH *SATAN*, THAT'S WHERE 'E BELONGS!

THE DEVIL'S THE ONLY ONE WHO'LL 'AVE 'IM!

...I TOOK THEIR CHILDREN AWAY FROM *ILLNESS*-- *POVERTY*-- I GAVE THEM--LOVE...

MERCIFUL FATHER-- LET THE PAIN END-- TAKE ME FROM THIS--INTO THE HEAVENS...

PLIP

PLIP

"NO!"

"YOUR BARGAIN IS NOT WITH HEAVEN..."

"...BUT WITH HELL."

PITIFUL SOUL! LISTEN TO THAT *UNHOLY* WAIL!

LOOK! THAT SHAPE IN THE FLAMES...

YER BALMY! THERE'S NOTHING--

By Hook or by Crook!

an ORDWAY-GAMMILL-JANKE production
story / pencils / finishes
with WHITMORE & COSTANZA
coloring / lettering
and PETERSON & CARLIN
assoc. editor / editor

SUPERMAN

Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER

FIVE MEN AND ONE WOMAN WERE TRIED AND CONVICTED IN THE DEATH OF DOCTOR ALEISTER HOOK, WHOSE REMAINS WERE NEVER FOUND...

"I MUST REACH THAT CARGO SHIP-- START ANEW AS MY DARK LORD COMMANDS..."

"...IN THE LAND KNOWN AS AMERICA."

WHILE SCOTLAND YARD NEVER OFFICIALLY CONNECTED HOOK WITH THE CASE, THE ABDUCTIONS ENDED ON THAT NIGHT ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO...

"YES. I KNOW METROPOLIS IS STILL STANDING. AND THAT IT PROSPERED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE I BECAME ITS PROTECTOR.

"YOU AND PA SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO FIND OUT I'D RETURNED TO EARTH BY WATCHING THE TV NEWS. I'M SO SORRY."

IT'S JUST THAT SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED AND -- WELL, THERE'S REALLY NO EXCUSE.

IT *WAS* PRETTY DARN CONFUSING TO FIND MATRIX MASQUERADING AS ME IN MY ABSENCE.

WE'VE BEEN WORRIED SHE'D CAUSE TROUBLE FOR YOU, CLARK.

NOTHING A GOOD CARPENTER CAN'T FIX.

WELL, YOU AND MATRIX HURRY HOME. I'M FIXING TO *HUG* YOU SO TIGHT, I JUST MIGHT BRUISE A SUPER-RIB OR TWO!

CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU! 'BYE!

THE SILENT BLAST THAT HIT MY APARTMENT* *COULD'VE* EMANATED FROM MY KRYPTONIAN ARTIFACT. I'D BEST KEEP IT LOCKED UP UNTIL--

MATRIX! GET DRESSED, WE'RE GOING TO SMALLVILLE.

*IN ACTION #643

I FOUND MATRIX UNCONSCIOUS, STILL CLUTCHING THE ARTIFACT -- COULD IT HAVE SENSED THAT *SHE* WAS NOT *ME*?

MATRIX IS ARTIFICIAL *PROTOMATTER*. I AM *CLARK KENT!*

LOOK, THIS HAS -- SOMEONE'S COMING.

MR.. KENT?

COME ON *IN*, FRIEND JIMMY!

HOLD ON, JIM.

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS! I'VE HEARD ABOUT LIGHTNING STRIKING *TWICE*...

...BUT I JUST GOT MR. KENT'S APARTMENT CLEANED UP FROM THE *LAST* TRA:HING!

I THOUGHT THESE INTERGANG ATTACKS WOULD END WITH MORGAN EDGE IN THE HOSPITAL AND ALL!

I, *UH*, DON'T THINK THIS WAS INTERGANG'S DOING, JIM, BUT I'LL LOOK INTO IT!

I *WAS* JUST ABOUT TO TAKE CLARK TO SMALLVILLE, SO...

YOU'RE *LUCKY* I'VE GOT MY CAMERA WITH ME. CLARK SHOULD HAVE THIS PLACE SHOT FOR *INSURANCE* PURPOSES!

TAKE *MY* PICTURE, JIMMY!

OH, SURE--A GOOD ONE FOR YOUR *SCRAPBOOK*!

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE? WE'VE *REALLY* GOT TO GO NOW.

GEEZ, I ALMOST FORGOT! THE GUARDIAN CAME TO SEE ME AFTER HE HEARD YOU WERE BACK!

HE SAID YOU WERE NEEDED AT "*THE PROJECT*"-- SOMETHING TO DO WITH MAGGIE SAWYER'S DAUGHTER! MAKE ANY SENSE TO YOU?

YES, IT DOES. JIM, I'D FEEL BETTER LEAVING IF I COULD COUNT ON YOU TO KEEP AN EYE ON "*CLARK*" 'TIL I RETURN.

NO SWEAT! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE TO PLOP MY BUTT DOWN ON THE COUCH AND WATCH SOME *MTV*!

I'VE BEEN FEELING KIND OF DRAGGED OUT ALL DAY-- HOPE I'M NOT COMING DOWN WITH A *VIRUS* OR SOMETHING!

WELL, I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. BOTH OF YOU COULD USE SOME REST!

I'VE GOT TO SOLVE THIS "MATRIX/CLARK" PROBLEM SOON! MAYBE MA AND PA CAN CONVINCE HER TO REVERT BACK TO HER TRUE FORM...

TWO CLARK KENTS IN THIS CITY IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH...

...BUT IF SHE WERE TO MIMIC ME AS SUPERMAN-- IT COULD BE DISASTROUS.

HURRY UP NOW, SPORT! MOMMY'S FEET ARE TIRED, AND WE'VE GOT A BUS TO CATCH.

MY NAME? BOBBY DAVIS.

NO. I'VE GOT TO GO. YOU WANT MY BALLOON?

WOW. HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR *EYES* GLOW LIKE--? YEAH, I COULD BE YOUR *FRIEND*.

...YOU KNOW HOW DADDY IS IF HIS DINNER'S NOT ON THE TABLE WHEN HE GETS HOME...

MOMMY! I'M GONNA GO PLAY WITH MY *FRIEND!*

HONEY? WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

BOBBY!

OH MY GOD! MY BABY!

SOMEBODY! HELP! MY BABY...

"HE'S GONE!"

CAPTAIN SAWYER, *PLEASE!* THIS IS A *MAXIMUM SECURITY* INSTALLATION! THERE ARE *PROCEDURES* TO BE FOLLOWED!

STUFF THE PROCEDURES! YOUR BOYS BROUGHT ME HERE IN THE BACK OF A *WINDOWLESS* TRANSPORT! I HAVE NO IDEA *WHERE* WE ARE, NOR DO I *CARE*...

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR *SECRETS*, I JUST WANT TO SEE *MY DAUGHTER!*

IT'S OKAY, SOLDIER. MS. SAWYER HAS A LEVEL-TWO CLEARANCE AND SHE'S BEEN VOUCHED FOR.

THEY'RE EXPECTING YOU IN LAB A-2.

JAMES SAWYER-- HOW *DARE* YOU?!

MAGGIE! CALM DOWN.

CALM DOWN? YOU DIDN'T EVEN CONSULT ME ON BRINGING *MY DAUGHTER HERE?* JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE CUSTODY...

LOOK, THIS IS IN *HER* BEST INTERESTS...

YOU'RE STILL THE SAME BULL-HEADED MAN I-- *SUPERMAN?*

SIMMER DOWN... *BOTH* OF YOU.

I PULLED SOME PRETTY COMPLICATED STRINGS TO GET YOU *BOTH* INTO THE *"PROJECT"* BECAUSE WE'RE *FRIENDS*, MAGGIE...

...AND BECAUSE OF MY *CONCERN* FOR YOUR CHILD.

JAMIE.

WHAT'S WRONG--WITH HER SKIN? MY POOR BABY!

MILK

THOSE OTHER CHILDREN. THEY WERE THE VICTIMS OF THAT *WEIRDO SKYHOOK!*

YES. I SUGGESTED TO THE AUTHORITIES THAT THEY ALL BE BROUGHT HERE.

WILL ONE OF YOU *PLEASE* TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?

SOMEONE FROM THE METROPOLIS HEALTH DEPARTMENT NOTIFIED ME THAT JAMIE HAD TO BE *QUARANTINED!*

THESE DOCTORS HAVE BEEN STUDYING THE KIDS, TRYING TO RETURN THEM TO NORMAL. THEY THINK YOUR DAUGHTER MIGHT HOLD THAT KEY.

I DIDN'T *DREAM* SHE WOULD BE AFFECTED LIKE *THIS.*

LET ME EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED, INSPECTOR...

NO, SUPERMAN, HE DESERVES TO HEAR IT FROM *ME*...

THIS ALL STARTED THAT TIME WHEN JAMIE *RAN AWAY* FROM YOU, JIM, BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T LET HER SEE HER *MOTHER.* *

MAYBE I WAS WRONG ABOUT THAT.

*IN SUPERMAN #15

"GLAD YOU CAN ADMIT THAT. WELL, WHEN SHE GOT TO METROPOLIS, SHE WAS TAKEN INTO A BAND OF CHILD-THIEVES BY AN ABOMINATION KNOWN AS SKYHOOK.

"HE ABDUCTED CHILDREN AND TAUGHT THEM TO STEAL, MUCH LIKE THE CHARACTER 'FAGIN' IN THE BOOK 'OLIVER TWIST.'

"SKYHOOK HAD THE POWER TO MUTATE THESE KIDS USING A SORT OF GESTATION POD...

"IT TOOK TO THE AIR TO ESCAPE, STILL CLUTCHING HER, WITH ME IN TOW...

"...AS IT LET GO OF JAMIE, I *EMPTIED* MY PISTOL INTO IT. SUPERMAN CAUGHT US BOTH, AND I THOUGHT THAT WAS THE *END* OF THE STORY..."

"THANK GOD SUPERMAN AND I ARRIVED IN TIME TO SAVE JAMIE FROM THAT FATE!

IT TURNS OUT YOUR DAUGHTER *WAS* INFECTED BY SKYHOOK.

EVERY DERMATOLOGIST WE VISITED WAS *BAFFLED.* NOW I KNOW *WHY.*

SHE'S VERY *BRAVE.*

I'M DR. RODRIGUEZ, AND THIS IS SECURITY HEAD GABRELLI.

THE OTHER BOYS AND GIRLS IN THERE ARE *FULLY* MUTATED. THUS FAR, WE HAVEN'T ASCERTAINED A METHOD OF REVERSAL...

MORE VEXING IS THE SITUATION WE HAVE WITH WITH THE SIX CHILDREN STILL IN THEIR MUTATION PODS.

ONE PASSED AWAY AFTER WE ATTEMPTED TO "*HATCH*" HIM--A MOVE WHICH PUT THE OTHERS IN A STATE OF EXTREME AGITATION.

PLEASE EXCUSE ME EVERYONE...

...I HAVE SOME PRESSING MATTERS TO ATTEND TO. GABRELLI, *YOU* KNOW HOW TO *REACH* ME. GOOD LUCK.

RIGHT. THANKS, SUPERMAN.

SO, HOW DOES MY CHILD FIT INTO THIS? I'LL NOT STAND FOR HER BEING YOUR *GUINEA PIG!*

JAMIE'S CASE IS NOT AS ADVANCED AS THE OTHERS...

...BECAUSE OF *THAT*, WE STAND A BETTER CHANCE OF DISCOVERING A *CURE*, WHICH IN TURN WOULD BENEFIT THE OTHERS!

"THIS MAY SOUND KIND OF CALLOUS, BUT MY CHILD IS ALL I CARE ABOUT RIGHT NOW...

"THE OTHERS HAVE LIVED MORE OF THEIR LIVES WITH THAT MONSTER SKYHOOK, THAN WITH THEIR OWN PARENTS.

"DO YOU THINK THEY'LL EVER BE ABLE TO RE-CLAIM THOSE LOST YEARS? WILL THEIR PARENTS STILL WANT THEM?"

MISSING:

MILK

OLIVER T. WOHL

1-800-555-56

"DO THEY STILL CARE?"

THAT PETERSON BOY STILL BOTHERING YOU?

MISSING:

MILK

OLIVER L. WOOD

1-800-555-5678

NO. MISS DRUCKER *CAUGHT* HIM AND GAVE HIM A DETENTION!

PEG. THE MILK CARTON?

DEAR GOD, IT'S *OLIVER!* IS *THIS* THE BEST THEY CAN *DO* TO FIND MY SON? A PICTURE ON A MILK CARTON?

MILK

TWO YEARS, AND ALL WE'VE GOT TO SHOW IS A *PICTURE* ON A MILK CARTON?

"LIE STILL NOW, LITTLE ONE."

MR. SKYHOOK, MY MOM'S GONNA BE MAD THAT I GOT THIS GUNK ALL OVER MY DRESS CLOTHES!

THOSE WORRIES WILL BE BEHIND YOU, BOBBY, ONCE MY MIRACLE IS DONE.

A SHORT NAP, AND *YOU* WILL FLY OUT OF THESE AQUEDUCTS, AND INTO THE NIGHT WITH *ME*.

FOR NOW, I MUST ATTEND TO OTHER THINGS...

TOO LONG I HAVE RESTED ALONE IN THIS DANK AQUEDUCT. THE TIME HAS COME FOR MY DARLINGS TO REJOIN ME.

COME BACK TO ME MY LOVELIES, TO MY BARREN NEST.

COME BACK TO YOUR UNCLE-- COME BAAACK...

THAT VOICE, OLIVER, DO YOU HEAR IT?

OUR UNCLE! HE WANTS US BACK, JAMIE!

WE MUST FOLLOW HIS VOICE.

QUICKLY. SEDATE THEM BEFORE THEY INJURE THEMSELVES.

MAGGIE, WE'VE HAD OUR DIFFERENCES, BUT WE MUST PUT THEM ASIDE WHERE JAMIE'S CON--

JIM! IT'S JAMIE!

DON'T GO IN THERE! COME BACK!

HURRY! WE'VE BEEN SPOTTED.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

I DON'T *KNOW*. I'M FOLLOWING UNCLE'S COMMANDS.

IT'S *SO* DARK! I HEAR SOMEONE BEHIND US!

STAY CLOSE BEHIND ME.

GEE, YOU'D BETTER GRAB HOLD OF ME--IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN *WITHOUT* WINGS.

EEEEEEE!

THAT WAS JAMIE'S SCREAM!

SLOW DOWN, YOU BIG OX...

...IT'S PITCH DARK IN HERE--BE CAREFUL!

THE DUCT SLANTS *DOWN-WARD* AT THIS BEND, MAG--

WHOAAAA!

MY SHOULDER! YOU-PUT ON-A LITTLE-WEIGHT, JIM!

JUST A SECOND-- MORE!

THOSE LADDER RUNGS..

GOTCHA! UP WE GO!

WHAT A *PLEASANT* SURPRISE! OLIVER, AND LITTLE JAMIE. DO YOU *REMEMBER* ME, MY LOVE?

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO CAUSE ANY TROUBLE, LITTLE ONE, LIKE *LAST TIME.*

NO, UNCLE.

LOVELY. THEN I SHALL FULFILL MY OLD *PROMISE* TO YOU.

UNCLE, IT'S TOO *CRAMPED* DOWN HERE! I LIKE THE *OLD CHURCH* A *LOT* BETTER!

OLIVER! WHERE ARE YOUR *MANNERS?* WOULD YOU HAVE US LEAVE BEFORE JAMIE HAS GAINED *HER* WINGS?

YOU STILL WANT THEM, MY DARLING?

WINGS. YES.

JAMIE!

HONEY, IT'S DADDY AND MOMMY! SNAP OUT OF IT!

SHE IS MY LITTLE ONE NOW. I CAN GIVE HER-- THINGS YOU CANNOT!

I'LL NOT LOSE HER AGAIN!

SEZ YOU, UGLY...

CAN YOU GET THROUGH TO THE "PROJECT"?

NOTHING BUT STATIC.

MY LITTLE OLIVER, ON THE OTHER HAND, CAN RECEIVE MY SIGNALS!

SPLOOSH

YOU HAVE DONE WELL, OLIVER. WE MUST MAKE HASTE!

MY TWO LOVELIES NEED MORE GESTATING IN THEIR PODS 'ERE THEY CAN FLY ON THEIR OWN.

:GLUB:

C'MON JAMES, IT'S ONLY SEWAGE! SHAKE A LEG!

FINALLY, THE OPEN SPACES. NOW YOU CAN SPREAD YOUR WINGS, OLIVER!

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE COME OUT ON THE BANKS OF THE *HOBS RIVER.*

IF THAT SPECK ON THE HORIZON IS *THEM*, I'D SAY WE LOST 'EM!

MAYBE NOT. I HAVE A FEELING HE'S HEADING FOR THE CHURCH WHERE THIS ALL STARTED!

GABRELLI, YOU GOT YOUR EARS ON? THIS IS SAWYER. OVER.

I READ YOU. WHAT'S YOUR LOCATION? OVER.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT US--GET WORD TO BIG BLUE TO MEET US AT OLD ST CHRISTOPHERS' CHURCH, PRONTO! OVER AND OUT.

I DON'T WANT TO GO *BACK*. CLARK KENT *LIVES* HERE!

MATRIX, THIS CHARADE HAS TO END! YOU ARE COMPLICATING MY LIFE BEYOND EVEN *MY* TOLERANCE.

ZEEEEEEEEEEE

WHAT IS THAT *HIGH* SOUND?

JIMMY'S *WATCH*? NO, IT'S *MORSE* CODE FROM GABRELLI AT THE PROJECT.

GEE, I *THOUGHT* I WAS *PALS* WITH *BOTH* OF THEM-- YET THEY MAKE *ME* SIT OUT IN THE *HALL* WHILE THEY GAB!

JIM?

THE *PROJECT* JUST SIGNALLED-- IT'S AN *EMERGENCY*. WOULD YOU--

--WATCH MR. KENT FOR *YOU AGAIN*? WELL, I--ER...

...NO PROBLEM.

SHOOT! I USED TO BE THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD SIGNAL HIM.

HERE WE ARE-- ST. CHRISTOPHER'S CHURCH--AND NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!

IF YOUSE TWO *STINK-BOMBS* WEREN'T COPS, I'DA NEVER PICKED YOUSE UP! WHAT'S *THIS*?

THE *METER* SAYS *SIX-FIFTY*! HERE'S *SEVEN*!

TAXI

FEEL LIKE BRUISING YOUR SHOULDER ON ON THAT *DOOR*?

MAGGIE, JAMES! THE PROJECT'S MESSAGE SAID IT WAS *URGENT*.

SKYHOOK HAS JAMIE IN THERE-- HE'S GOT HER IN ONE OF THOSE PODS!

I *THOUGHT* HE WAS--

EEEEEE

JAMIE!

CRASH

SUPERMAN! HELP ME, I-I'M SCARED!

HALT! THIS CHILD IS SPECIAL TO ME -- SHE WAS CHEATED OUT OF HER WINGS LAST TIME...

SHE'LL NOT BE DEPRIVED AGAIN -- I'LL KILL HER BEFORE SHE'S PUT THROUGH THAT AGAIN!

MY GOD -- PLEASE -- DON'T!

LIAR!

YOU DON'T WANT TO HURT HER...

SCHPLOOP

OLIVER! HOW CAN YOU--

YOU PROMISED TO *NEVER* HURT US! SHE DIDN'T DO NOTHIN'! SHE'S JUST *SCARED*. YOU *DREW BLOOD!*

TREACHEROUS *WHELP!* UNCLE WILL TEACH YOU TO *DISOBEY!*

YOU'LL HAVE TO GO THROUGH *ME* FIRST!

POFF

:KAFF KAFF:

THAT WAS LIKE SHAKING A *DUSTY* RUG. I'M ACTUALLY HAVING TROUBLE BREATHING!

MOMMY.

OH, BABY, LET ME HOLD YOU.

YOU HAVE DESTROYED MY MIRACLE A *SECOND* TIME--TURNED THESE CHILDREN FROM ME...

IN OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER, I DIDN'T MIX IT UP WITH THIS CHARACTER PHYSICALLY...HE MAY BE TOUGHER THAN HE--

--LOOKS!

THAT'S WHY THE DUST AFFECTED MY BREATHING! HIS POWERS ARE SUPERNATURAL! I'M VULNERABLE TO *MAGIC!*

POOFF

MORE OF HIS PARTICLES-- CREATING A CLOUD OF *DUST* ALL AROUND US...

HE DOESN'T *SEEM* TO BE ABLE TO SEE THROUGH IT!

...SUPERMAN!

NO!

RAAAAAAHHHHHH

IT *WORKED!* HE MISTOOK THE STATUE FOR SUPERMAN!

JAMES? YOU MOVED IT?

HEY, MY *WINGS!* WHAT HAPPENED?

ALL I KNOW IS, MY LITTLE JAMIE'S *CURED!*

SO ARE OLIVER AND, UH...

MY NAME IS *BOBBY!*

LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS FROM THE PROJECT ARE IN TIME TO AUTOPSY THE "*LATE*" SKYHOOK...

HOPEFULLY THE KIDS THAT JAMIE PLAYED WITH *THERE* HAVE REVERTED TO *NORMAL* ALREADY!

JAMES BUCHANAN SAWYER--ONLY *YOU* COULD CRAWL THROUGH *SEWAGE* AND COME UP SMELLING LIKE A *ROSE.*

SOB NOW I CAN'T *FLY...*

OLIVER--YOU CAN FLY WITH ME *ANYTIME!*

JOIN US BACK HERE IN *SUPERMAN* #35 FOR A "DOUBLE FEATURE"... IN THIRTY DAYS--BUT FIRST BE SURE TO PICK UP "ECHOES" IN *ADVENTURES* #457, AND THEN *ACTION* #644 WITH "DOPPELGANGER"!

FOUR YEARS AGO.
Hfff...
NG.
MASTER BRUCE!
ALLOW ME TO HELP, SIR.
ANOTHER ROUGH NIGHT? THIS MAKES...TEN IN A ROW.
A NEW PERSONAL RECORD, I BELIEVE.
I ONLY HOPE THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT IS FARING WORSE THAN YOU.
DOING WHAT I CAN, ALFRED...
BUT I'M JUST ONE MAN...
WHICH DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE ALONE, SIR. AND THAT REMINDS ME...
...YOU HAVE A VISITOR.

WORLD'S FINEST: YEAR SEVEN

A BETTER WORLD

KARL KESEL	PETER DOHERTY	ROBERT CAMPANELLA	ALEX SINCLAIR	CLEM ROBINS	JOSEPH ILLIDGE	DARREN VINCENZO
writer	penciller	inker	colorist	letterer	assoc. ed.	editor

BATMAN created by BOB KANE • SUPERMAN created by SIEGEL & SHUSTER

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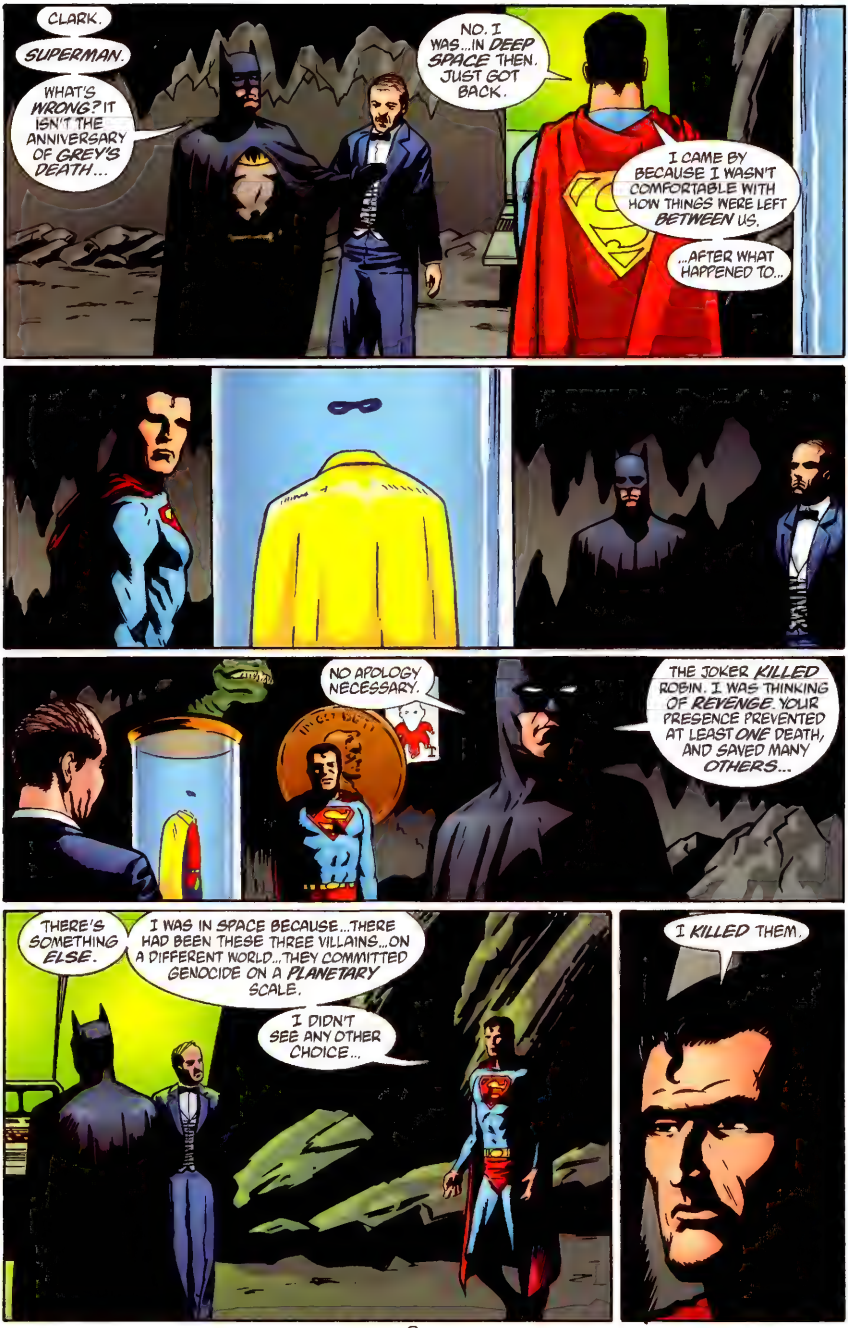
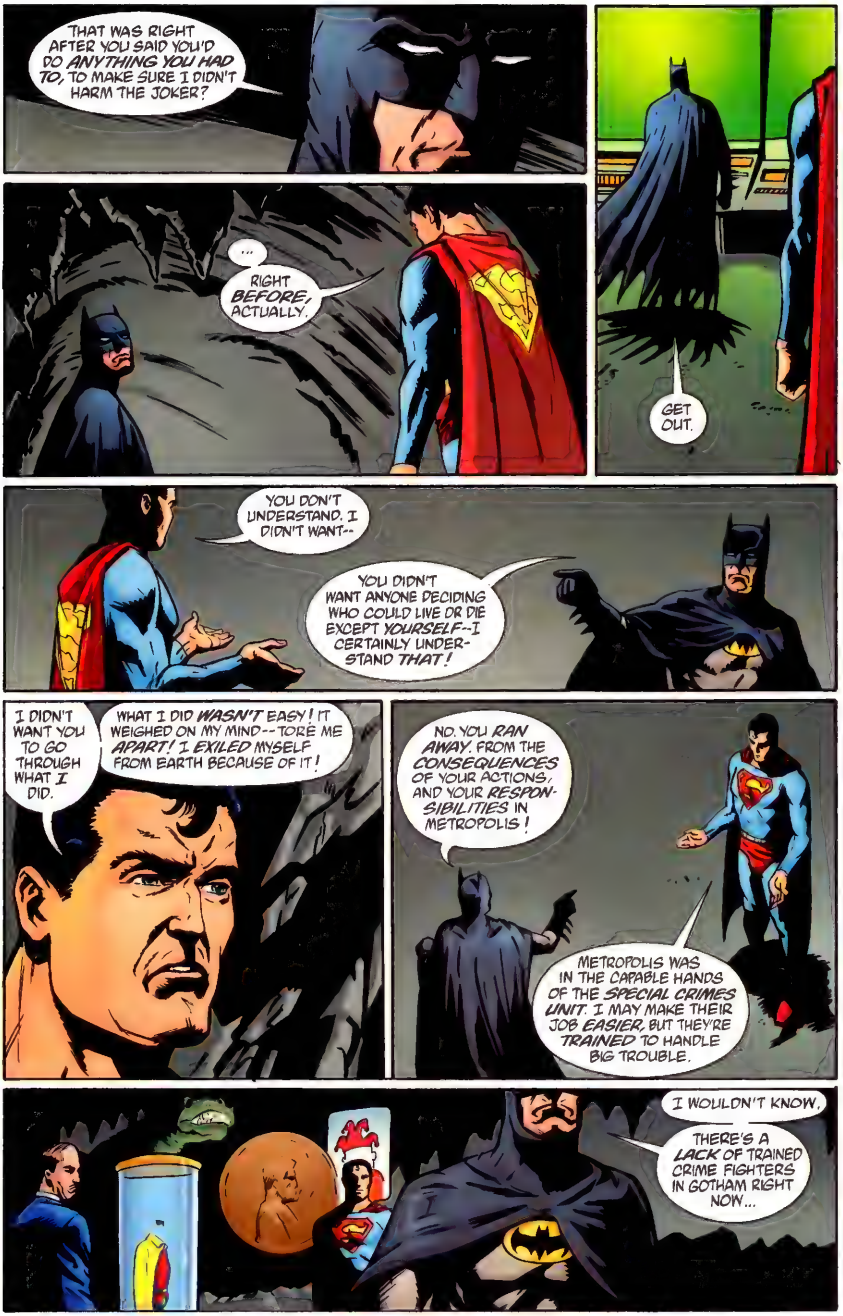
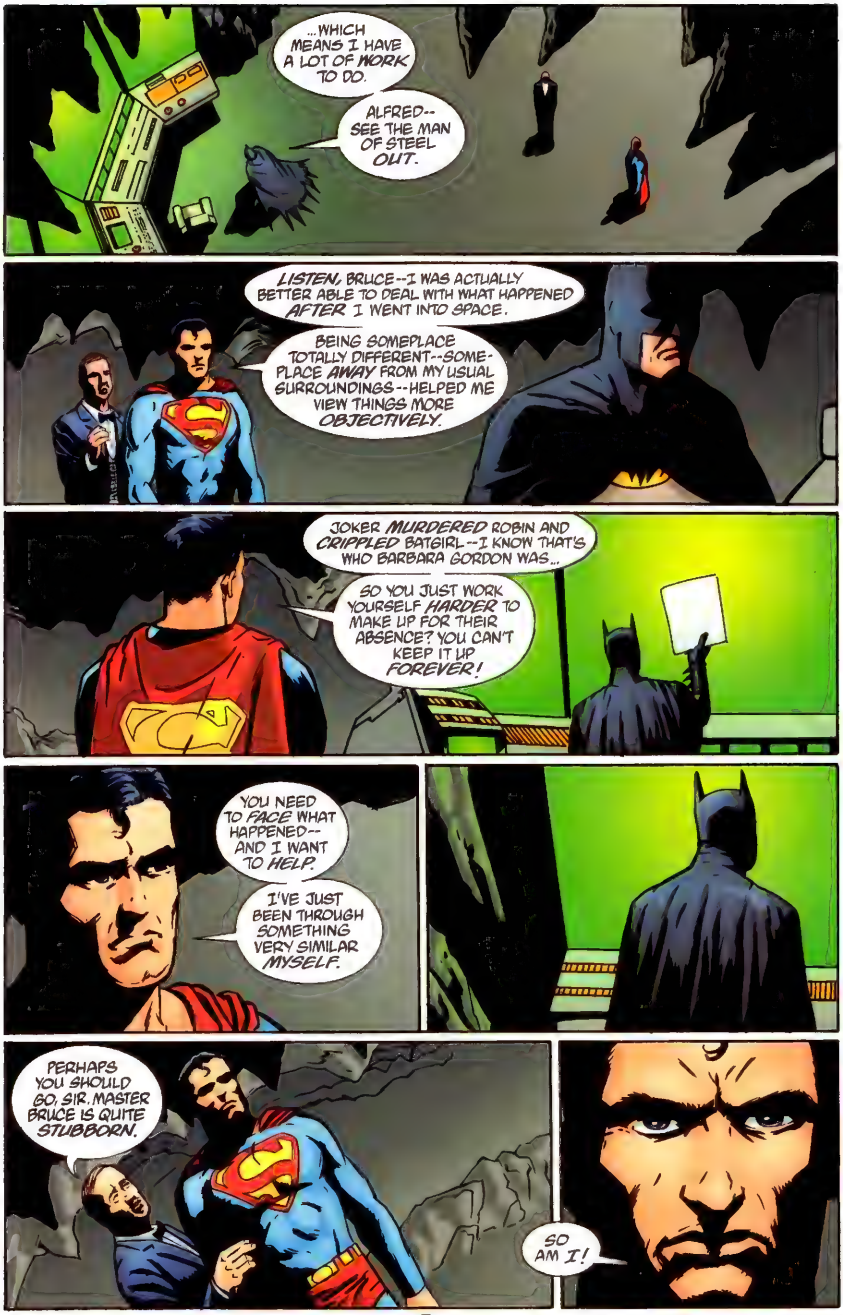
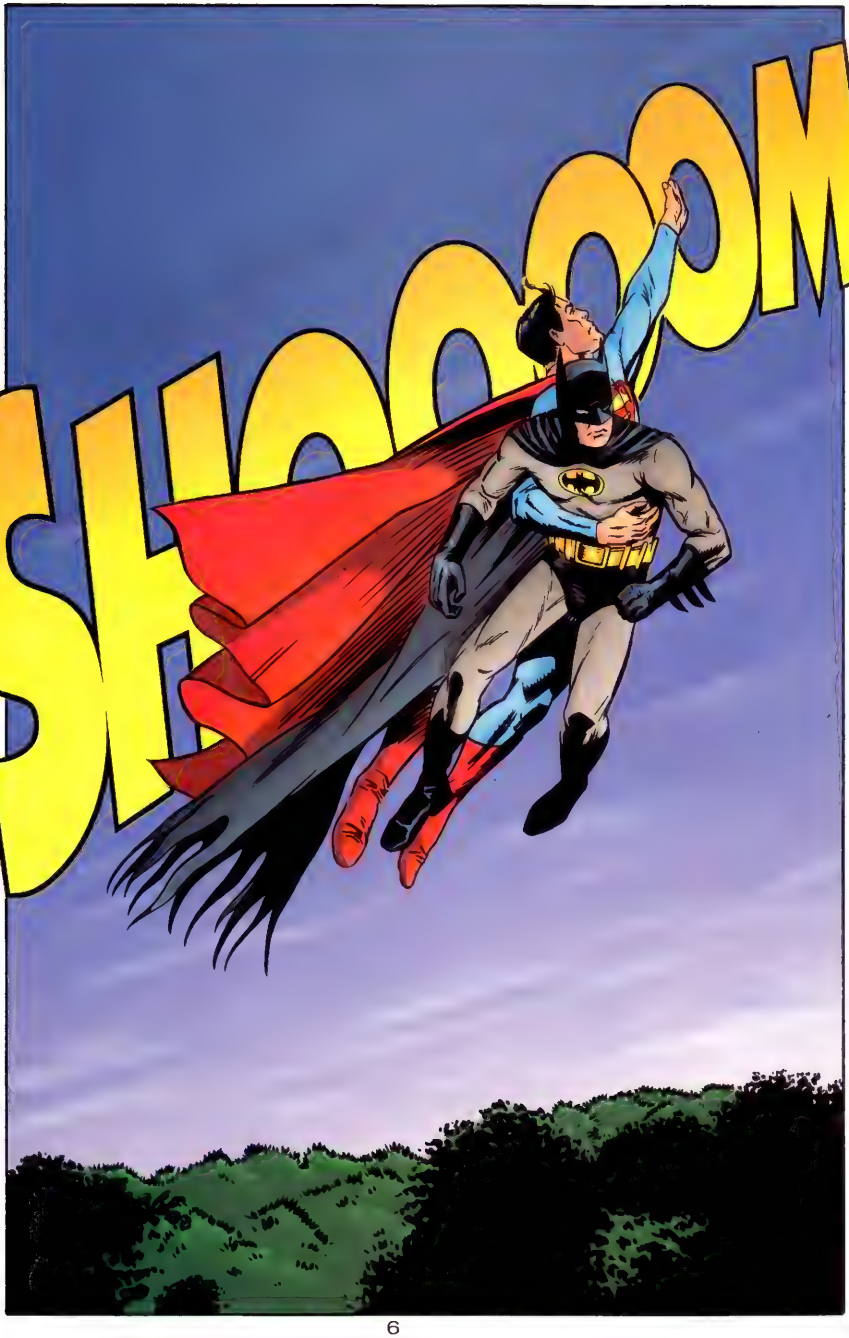
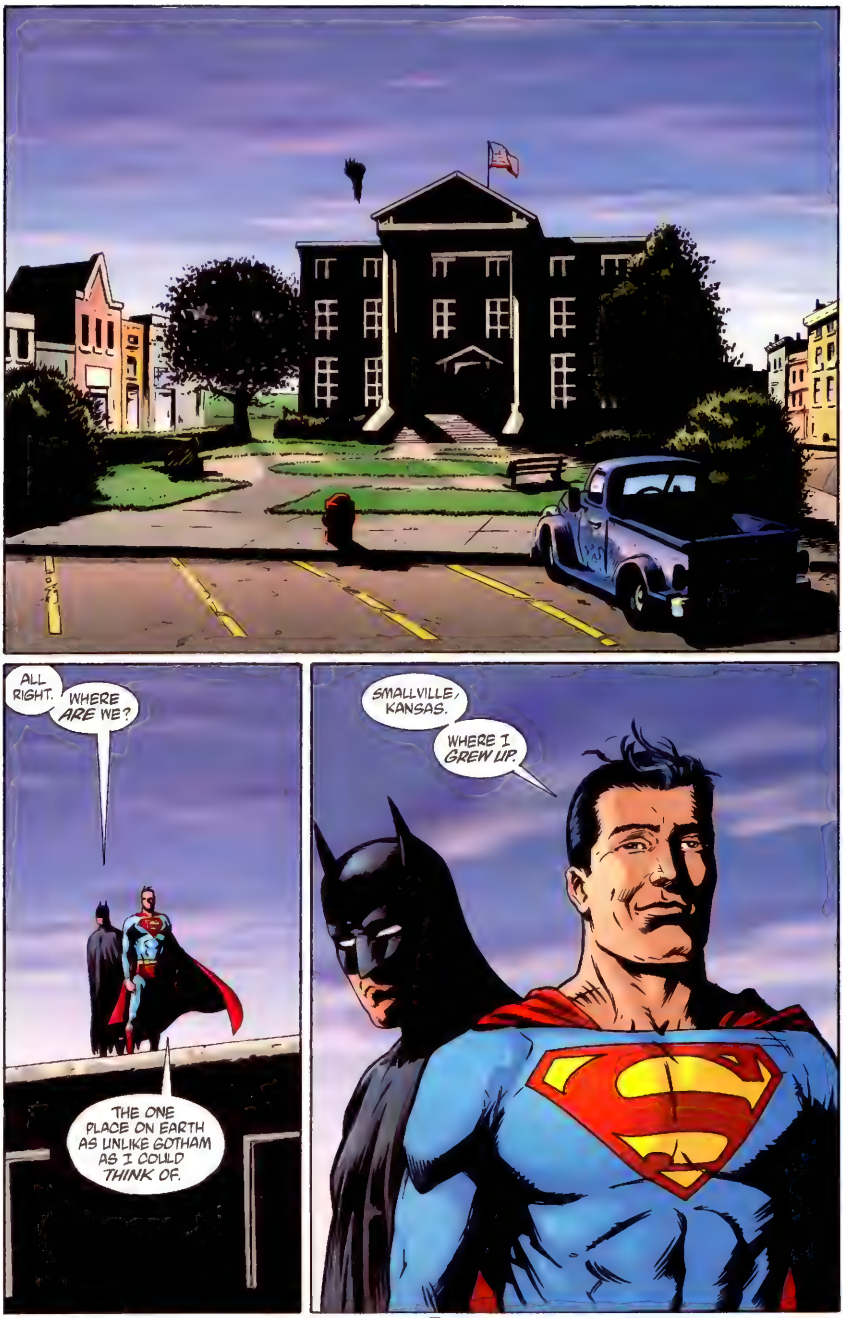
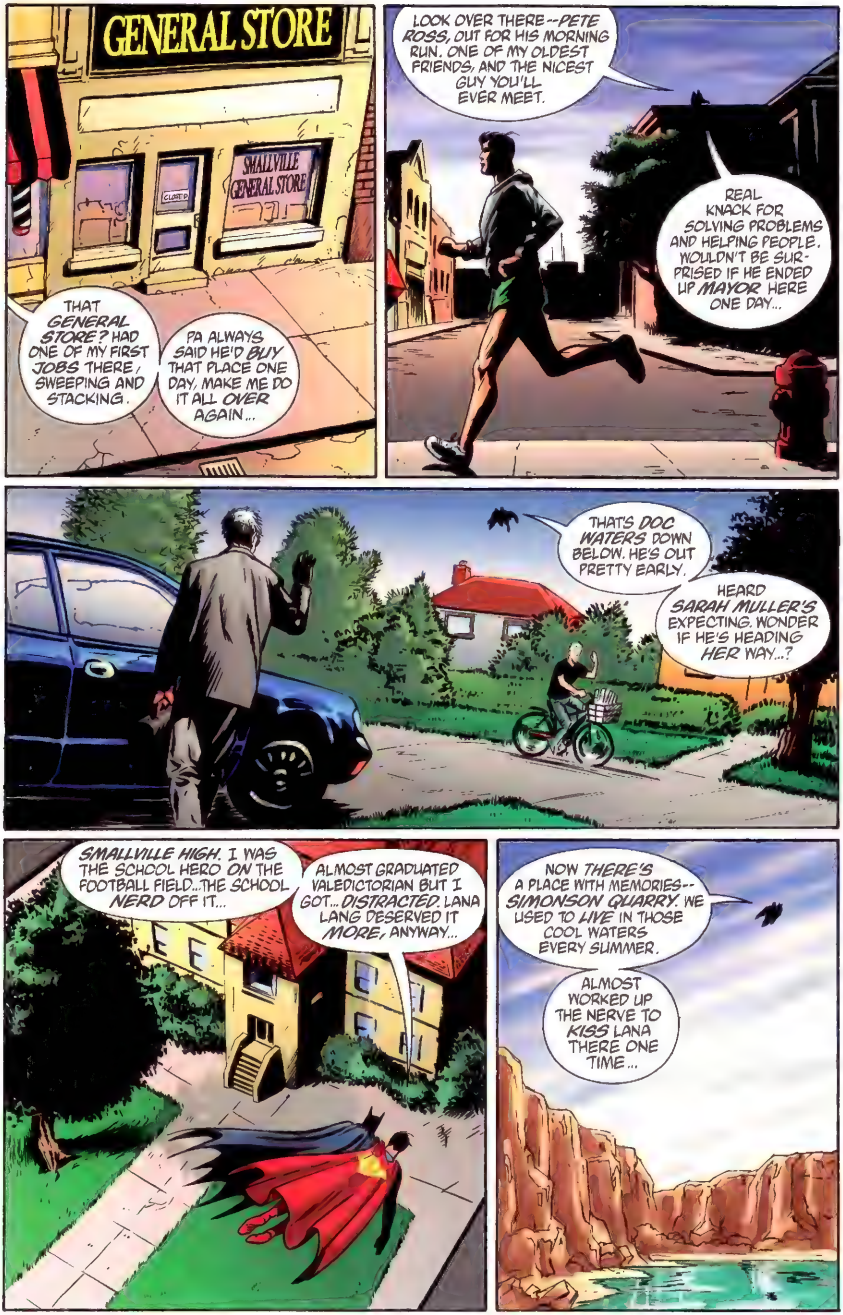

CLARK.
SUPERMAN.
WHAT'S WRONG? IT ISN'T THE ANNIVERSARY OF GREY'S DEATH...
NO. I WAS...IN DEEP SPACE THEN. JUST GOT BACK.
I CAME BY BECAUSE I WASN'T COMFORTABLE WITH HOW THINGS WERE LEFT BETWEEN US.
...AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO...
NO APOLOGY NECESSARY.
THE JOKER KILLED ROBIN. I WAS THINKING OF REVENGE. YOUR PRESENCE PREVENTED AT LEAST ONE DEATH, AND SAVED MANY OTHERS...
THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE.
I WAS IN SPACE BECAUSE...THERE HAD BEEN THESE THREE VILLAINS...ON A DIFFERENT WORLD...THEY COMMITTED GENOCIDE ON A PLANETARY SCALE.
I DIDN'T SEE ANY OTHER CHOICE...
I KILLED THEM.

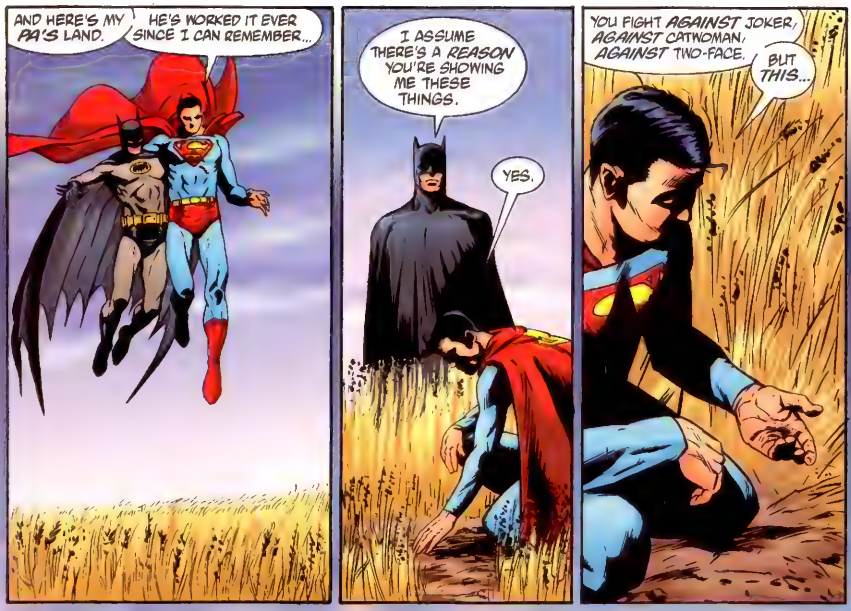

THAT WAS RIGHT AFTER YOU SAID YOU'D DO ANYTHING YOU HAD TO, TO MAKE SURE I DIDN'T HARM THE JOKER?
...
RIGHT BEFORE, ACTUALLY.
GET OUT.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I DIDN'T WANT--
YOU DIDN'T WANT ANYONE DECIDING WHO COULD LIVE OR DIE EXCEPT YOURSELF--I CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND THAT!
I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GO THROUGH WHAT I DID.
WHAT I DID WASN'T EASY! IT WEIGHED ON MY MIND--TORE ME APART! I EXILED MYSELF FROM EARTH BECAUSE OF IT!
NO. YOU RAN AWAY. FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS, AND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN METROPOLIS!
METROPOLIS WAS IN THE CAPABLE HANDS OF THE SPECIAL CRIMES UNIT. I MAY MAKE THEIR JOB EASIER, BUT THEY'RE TRAINED TO HANDLE BIG TROUBLE.
I WOULDN'T KNOW.
THERE'S A LACK OF TRAINED CRIME FIGHTERS IN GOTHAM RIGHT NOW...

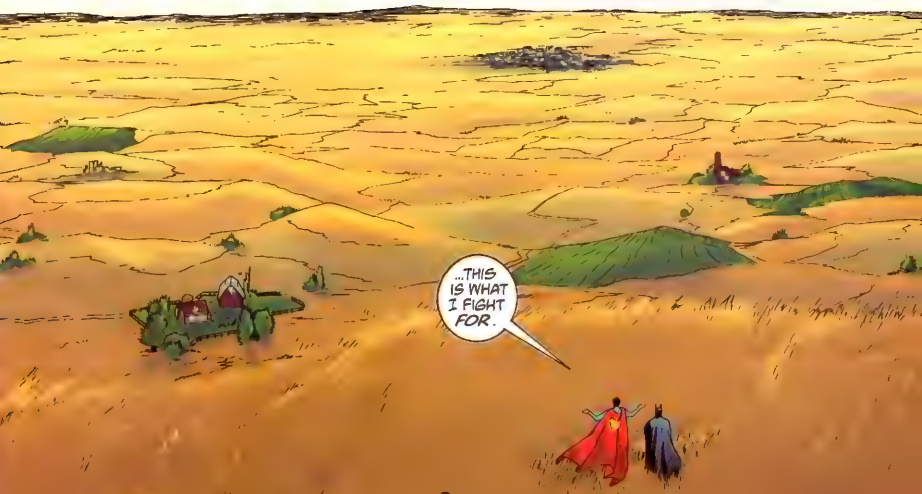

...WHICH MEANS I HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO.
ALFRED--SEE THE MAN OF STEEL OUT.
LISTEN, BRUCE--I WAS ACTUALLY BETTER ABLE TO DEAL WITH WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I WENT INTO SPACE.
BEING SOMEPLACE TOTALLY DIFFERENT--SOMEPLACE AWAY FROM MY USUAL SURROUNDINGS--HELPED ME VIEW THINGS MORE OBJECTIVELY.
JOKER MURDERED ROBIN AND CRIPPLED BATGIRL--I KNOW THAT'S WHO BARBARA GORDON WAS...
SO YOU JUST WORK YOURSELF HARDER TO MAKE UP FOR THEIR ABSENCE? YOU CAN'T KEEP IT UP FOREVER!
YOU NEED TO FACE WHAT HAPPENED--AND I WANT TO HELP.
I'VE JUST BEEN THROUGH SOMETHING VERY SIMILAR MYSELF.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD GO, SIR. MASTER BRUCE IS QUITE STUBBORN.
SO AM I!


SHOOOOM

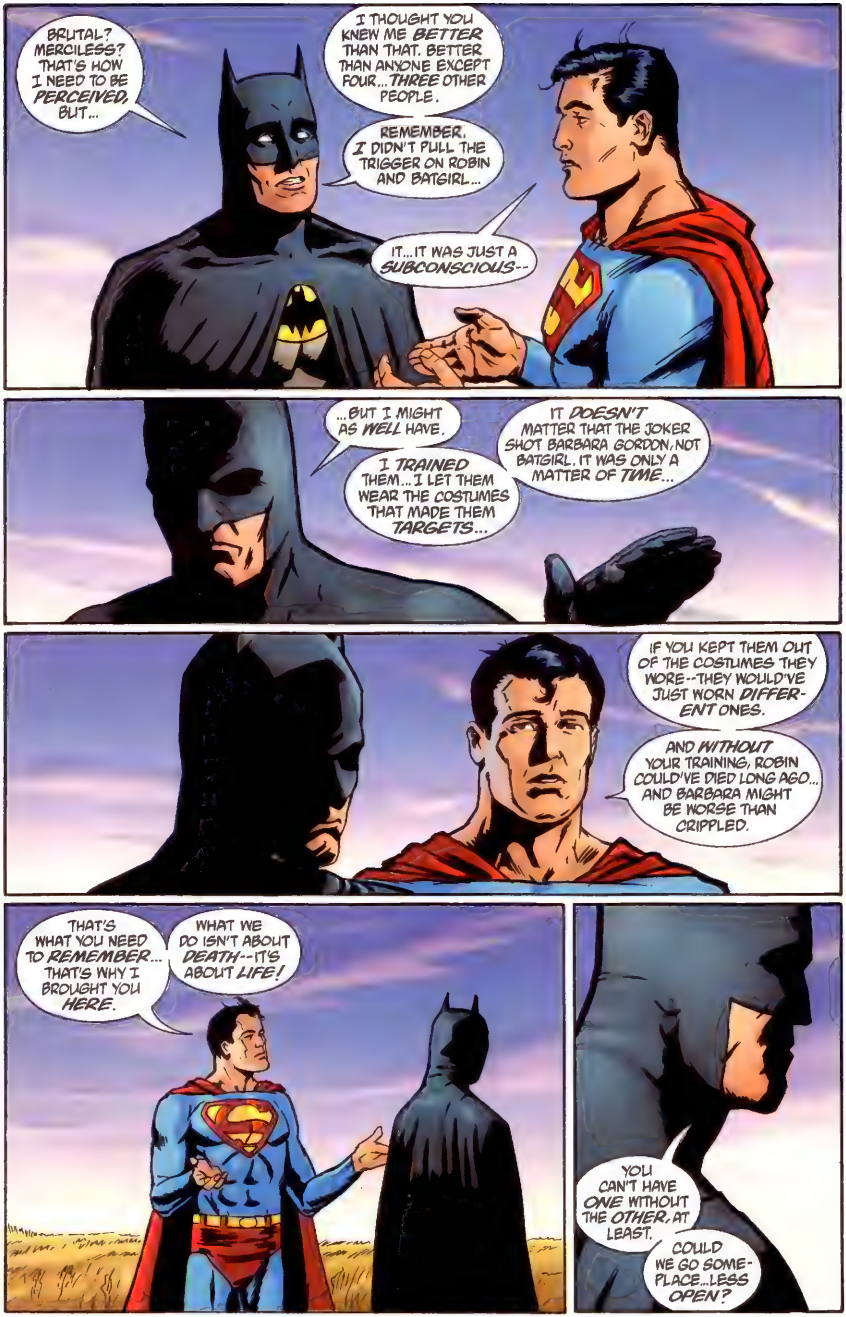

ALL RIGHT.
WHERE ARE WE?
THE ONE PLACE ON EARTH AS UNLIKE GOTHAM AS I COULD THINK OF.
SMALLVILLE, KANSAS.
WHERE I GREW UP.

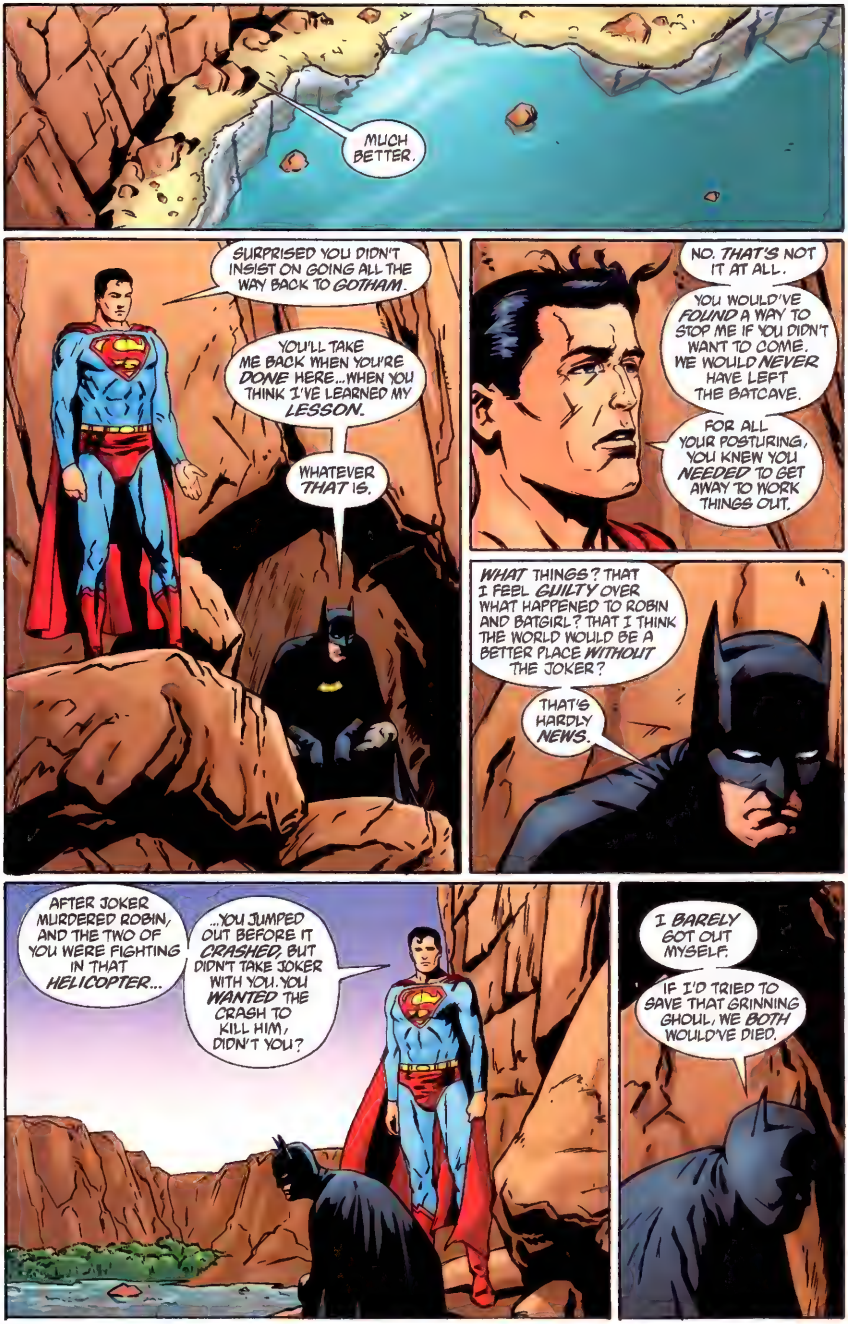

GENERAL STORE
SMALLVILLE GENERAL STORE
THAT GENERAL STORE? HAD ONE OF MY FIRST JOBS THERE, SWEEPING AND STACKING.
PA ALWAYS SAID HE'D BUY THAT PLACE ONE DAY, MAKE ME DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN...
LOOK OVER THERE--PETE ROSS, OUT FOR HIS MORNING RUN. ONE OF MY OLDEST FRIENDS, AND THE NICEST GUY YOU'LL EVER MEET.
REAL KNACK FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS AND HELPING PEOPLE. WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF HE ENDED UP MAYOR HERE ONE DAY...
THAT'S DOC WATERS DOWN BELOW. HE'S OUT PRETTY EARLY.
HEARD SARAH MULLER'S EXPECTING. WONDER IF HE'S HEADING HER WAY...?
SMALLVILLE HIGH. I WAS THE SCHOOL HERO ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD...THE SCHOOL NERD OFF IT...
ALMOST GRADUATED VALEDICTORIAN BUT I GOT... DISTRACTED. LANA LANG DESERVED IT MORE, ANYWAY...
NOW THERE'S A PLACE WITH MEMORIES--SIMONSON QUARRY. WE USED TO LIVE IN THOSE COOL WATERS EVERY SUMMER.
ALMOST WORKED UP THE NERVE TO KISS LANA THERE ONE TIME...

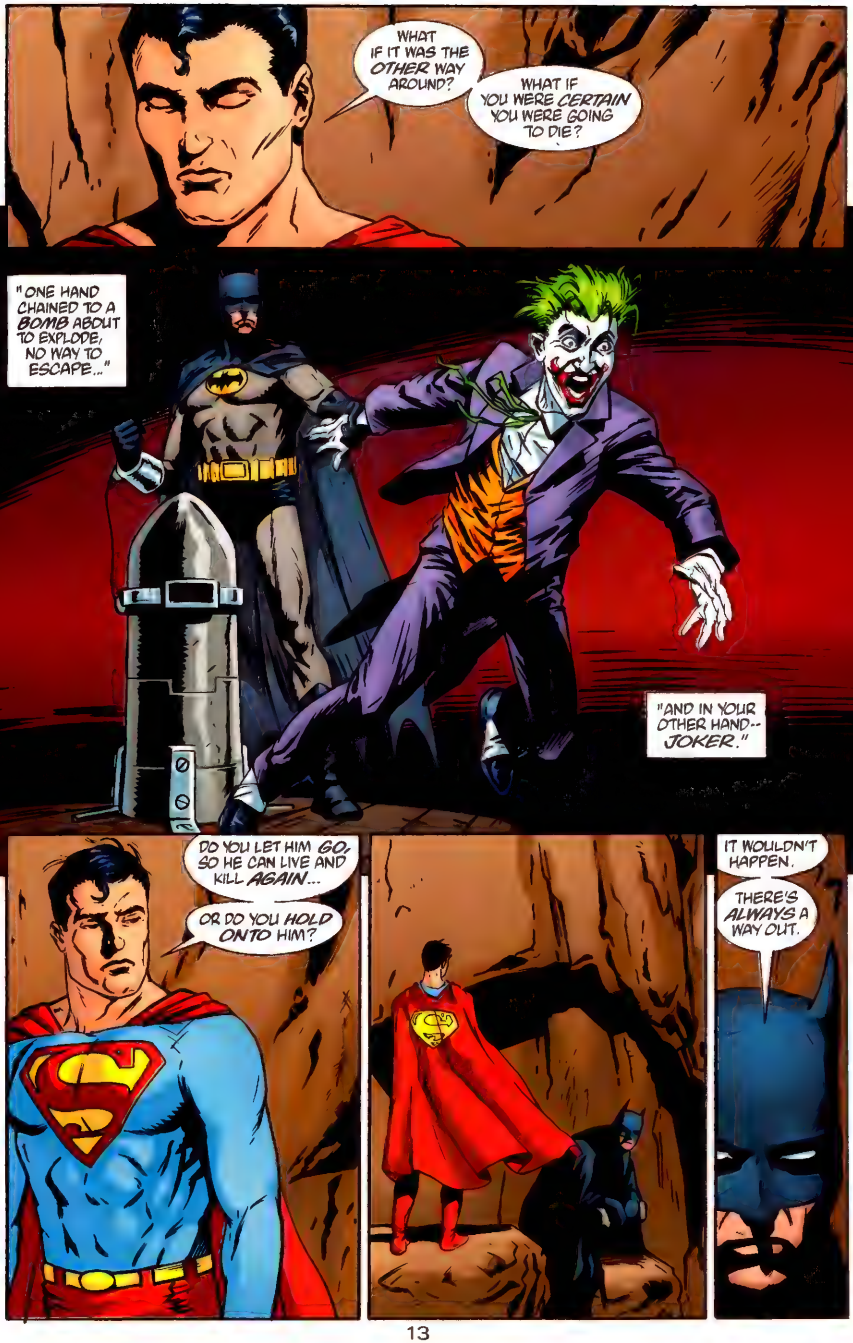

AND HERE'S MY PA'S LAND.
HE'S WORKED IT EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER...
I ASSUME THERE'S A REASON YOU'RE SHOWING ME THESE THINGS.
YES.
YOU FIGHT AGAINST JOKER, AGAINST CATWOMAN, AGAINST TWO-FACE.
BUT THIS...


...THIS IS WHAT I FIGHT FOR.

VERY TOUCHING--HONESTLY.
BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE HOW I FEEL ABOUT ROBIN'S MURDER... BATGIRL'S CRIPPLING...
IT'S LIKE I'M BEING SHOWN THINGS BY THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST --BUT IT'S ALL YOUR PAST, NOT MINE.
WAIT... THIS IS WHAT YOU SAID YOU FIGHT FOR.
THIS IS WHAT YOU WERE PRESERVING AND PROTECTING WHEN YOU KILLED THOSE VILLAINS.
YOU WANT ME TO UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU? TO MAKE UP FOR NOT TELLING ME THE WHOLE TRUTH BEFORE.
YOU'RE ASKING FOR MY FORGIVENESS. MY... ABSOLUTION.
NO! I--
WELL... I SUPPOSE THERE MIGHT BE SOME TRUTH TO THAT--BUT IT ISN'T JUST ABOUT THAT!
TONIGHT IN THE BATCAVE--I SAW HOW YOU'RE PUSHING YOURSELF...
...PUNISHING YOURSELF FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO BATGIRL AND ROBIN... FOR WHAT YOU COULD HAVE, SHOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY.
I KNOW... BECAUSE THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO ME.
AFTER I EXECUTED THOSE VILLAINS, I ADOPTED A NEW IDENTITY--ONE THAT WENT LOOKING FOR TROUBLE AND SHOWED NO MERCY.
THE KIND OF BRUTAL HERO I'D SUBCONSCIOUSLY DECIDED I'D BECOME. AN IDENTITY MODELED, IN SOME WAYS... ON YOU!

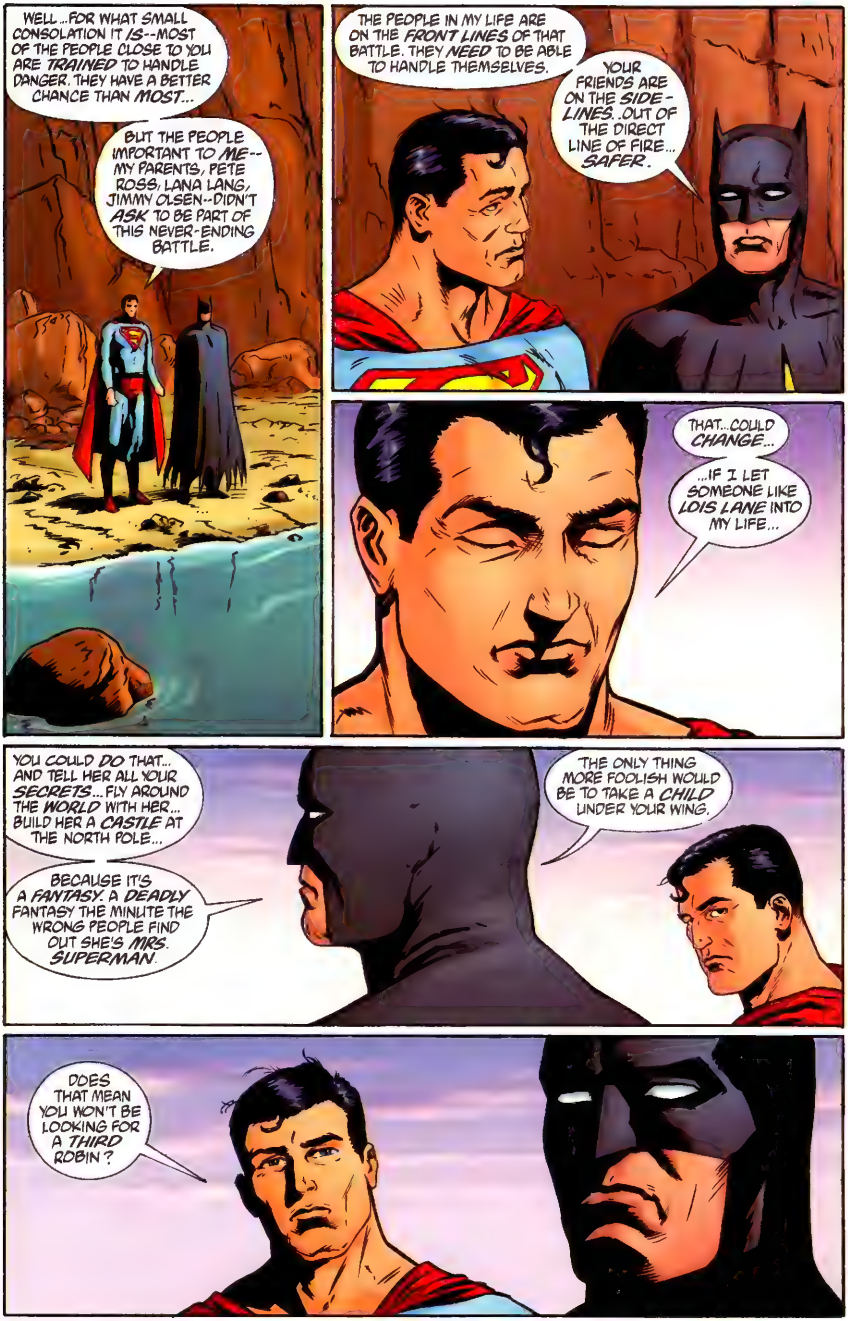

BRUTAL? MERCILESS? THAT'S HOW I NEED TO BE PERCEIVED, BUT...
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ME BETTER THAN THAT. BETTER THAN ANYONE EXCEPT FOUR...THREE OTHER PEOPLE.
REMEMBER, I DIDN'T PULL THE TRIGGER ON ROBIN AND BATGIRL...
IT...IT WAS JUST A SUBCONSCIOUS--
...BUT I MIGHT AS WELL HAVE.
I TRAINED THEM...I LET THEM WEAR THE COSTUMES THAT MADE THEM TARGETS...
IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT THE JOKER SHOT BARBARA GORDON, NOT BATGIRL. IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME...
IF YOU KEPT THEM OUT OF THE COSTUMES THEY WORE--THEY WOULD'VE JUST WORN DIFFERENT ONES.
AND WITHOUT YOUR TRAINING, ROBIN COULD'VE DIED LONG AGO... AND BARBARA MIGHT BE WORSE THAN CRIPPLED.
THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED TO REMEMBER... THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT YOU HERE.
WHAT WE DO ISN'T ABOUT DEATH--IT'S ABOUT LIFE!
YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER, AT LEAST.
COULD WE GO SOMEPLACE...LESS OPEN?


MUCH BETTER.
SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T INSIST ON GOING ALL THE WAY BACK TO GOTHAM.
YOU'LL TAKE ME BACK WHEN YOU'RE DONE HERE...WHEN YOU THINK I'VE LEARNED MY LESSON.
WHATEVER THAT IS.
NO. THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL.
YOU WOULD'VE FOUND A WAY TO STOP ME IF YOU DIDN'T WANT TO COME. WE WOULD NEVER HAVE LEFT THE BATCAVE.
FOR ALL YOUR POSTURING, YOU KNEW YOU NEEDED TO GET AWAY TO WORK THINGS OUT.
WHAT THINGS? THAT I FEEL GUILTY OVER WHAT HAPPENED TO ROBIN AND BATGIRL? THAT I THINK THE WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE WITHOUT THE JOKER?
THAT'S HARDLY NEWS.
AFTER JOKER MURDERED ROBIN, AND THE TWO OF YOU WERE FIGHTING IN THAT HELICOPTER...
...YOU JUMPED OUT BEFORE IT CRASHED, BUT DIDN'T TAKE JOKER WITH YOU. YOU WANTED THE CRASH TO KILL HIM, DIDN'T YOU?
I BARELY GOT OUT MYSELF.
IF I'D TRIED TO SAVE THAT GRINNING GHOUL, WE BOTH WOULD'VE DIED.

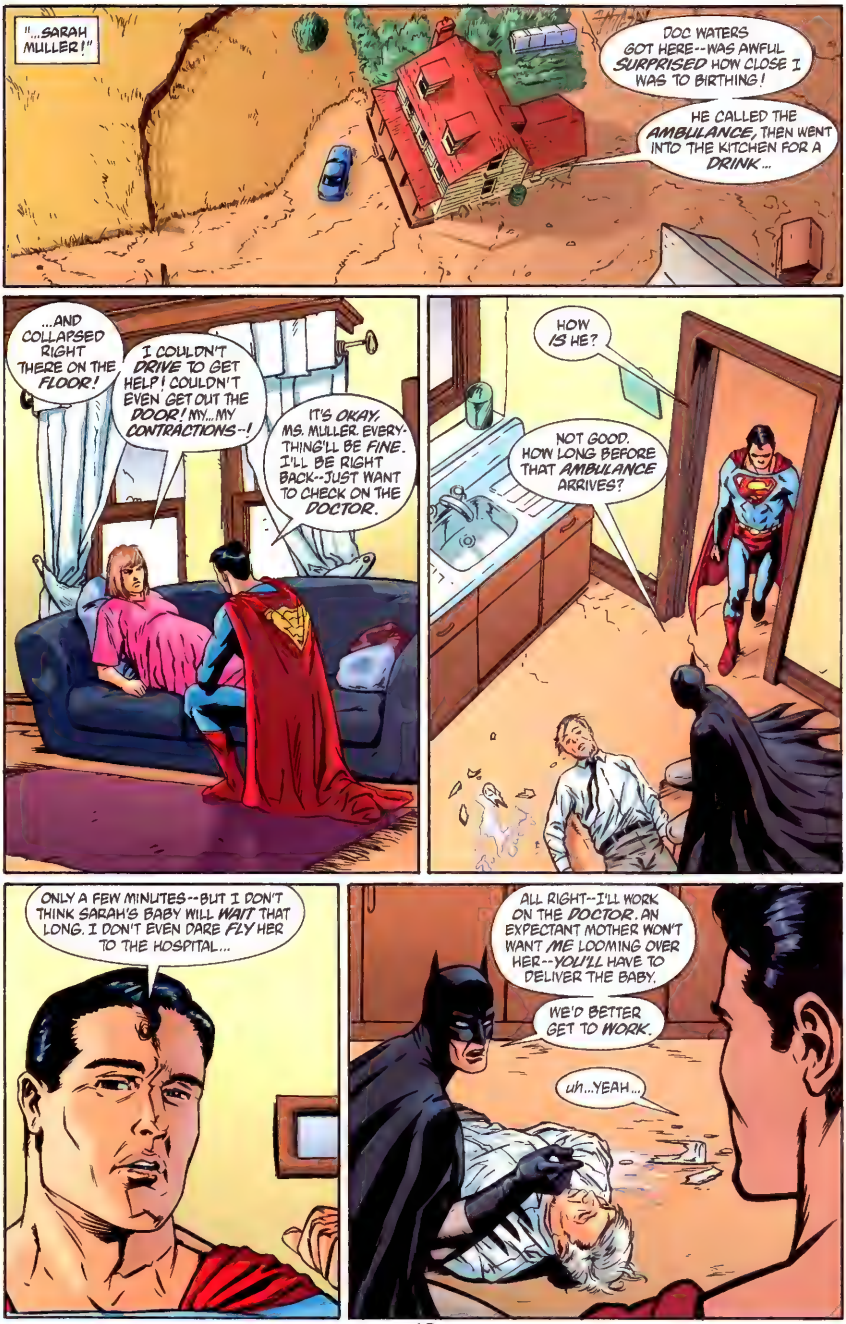

WHAT IF IT WAS THE OTHER WAY AROUND?
WHAT IF YOU WERE CERTAIN YOU WERE GOING TO DIE?
"ONE HAND CHAINED TO A BOMB ABOUT TO EXPLODE, NO WAY TO ESCAPE..."
"AND IN YOUR OTHER HAND-- JOKER."
DO YOU LET HIM GO, SO HE CAN LIVE AND KILL AGAIN...
OR DO YOU HOLD ONTO HIM?
IT WOULDN'T HAPPEN.
THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY OUT.

BUT SINCE WE'RE DEALING WITH HYPOTHETICALS-- WHAT IF YOU WERE IN A SIMILAR POSITION...
"...FACED WITH A RELENTLESS, DESTRUCTIVE FORCE THAT ANNIHILATES EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE IN ITS PATH.
"INCLUDING YOU."
THE ONLY WAY TO STOP IT IS TO KILL IT.
DO YOU?
IF IT WAS THE ONLY WAY?
YES.
I'D BRING IT DOWN WITH MY LAST BREATH.

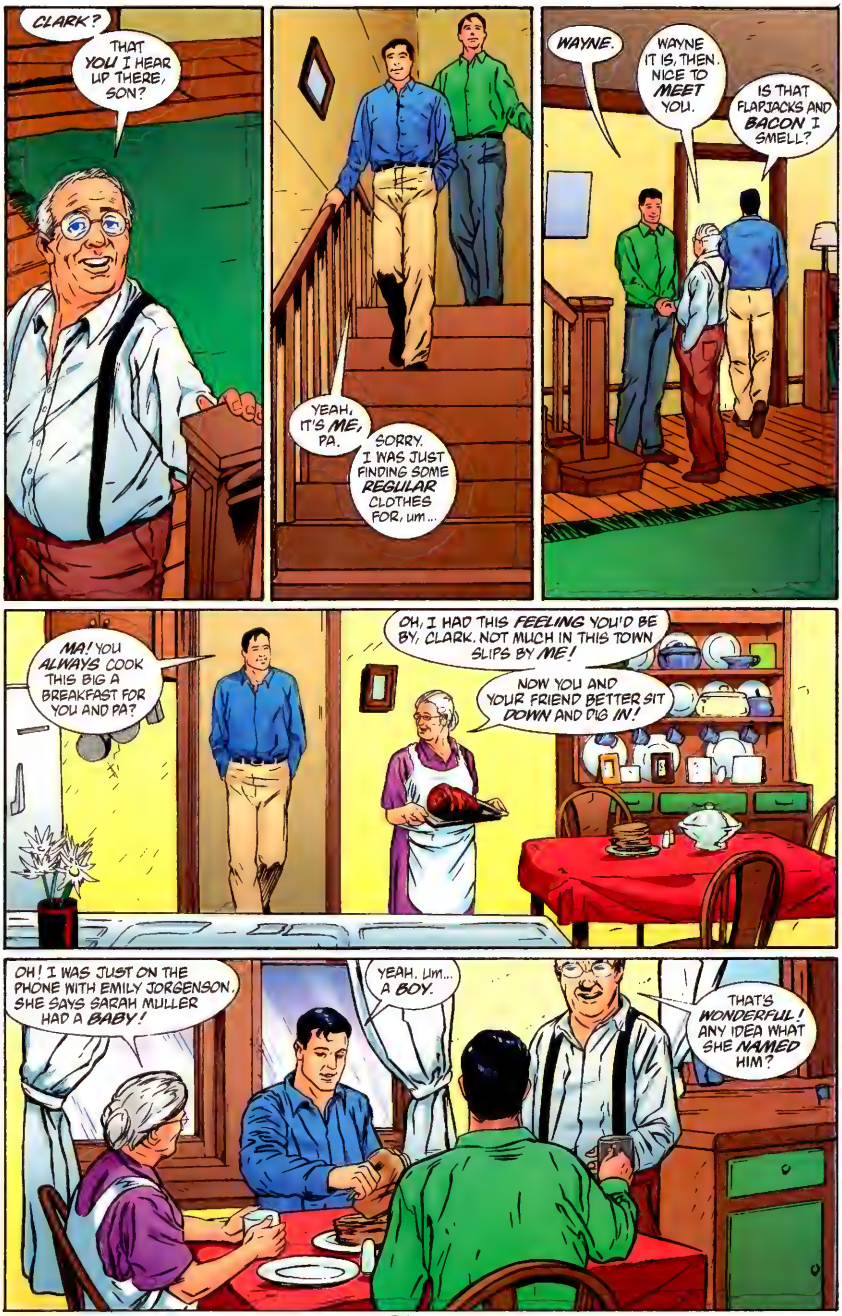
REMEMBER ERIK STANG?
SURE. THE SERIAL KILLER WHO KIDNAPPED HARRISON GREY SIX YEARS AGO. THE MAN WE DIDN'T SAVE OUR FRIEND FROM.
CALLED HIMSELF A VIGILANTE. IN SOME TWISTED WAY, HE THOUGHT HE WAS LIKE US.
MAYBE STANG WAS RIGHT.
LOOK AT US -- TALKING ABOUT WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WE WOULD KILL UNDER.
HE SAID WE'D COME TO THIS.
NO. THREE DEATHS ON MY HANDS ARE THREE TOO MANY.
IF THERE'S A FOURTH -- I WON'T WALK AWAY, EITHER.
WISH I WAS THAT CERTAIN.
WHAT IF YOUR SACRIFICE MEANS HUNDREDS MORE DIE? HUNDREDS YOU COULD HAVE SAVED IF YOU'D LIVED.
EVEN IF IT'S ONLY ONE LIFE.
WHAT IF YOUR DEATH MEANT SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU WOULD DIE, TOO?


WELL...FOR WHAT SMALL CONSOLATION IT *IS*--MOST OF THE PEOPLE CLOSE TO YOU ARE *TRAINED* TO HANDLE DANGER. THEY HAVE A BETTER CHANCE THAN *MOST*...
BUT THE PEOPLE IMPORTANT TO *ME*--MY PARENTS, PETE ROSS, LANA LANG, JIMMY OLSEN--DIDN'T *ASK* TO BE PART OF THIS NEVER-ENDING BATTLE.
THE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE ARE ON THE *FRONT LINES* OF THAT BATTLE. THEY *NEED* TO BE ABLE TO HANDLE THEMSELVES.
YOUR FRIENDS ARE ON THE *SIDE-LINES*...OUT OF THE DIRECT LINE OF FIRE... *SAFER*.
THAT...COULD *CHANGE*...
...IF I LET SOMEONE LIKE *LOIS LANE* INTO MY LIFE...
YOU COULD *DO* THAT... AND TELL HER ALL YOUR *SECRETS*... FLY AROUND THE *WORLD* WITH HER... BUILD HER A *CASTLE* AT THE NORTH POLE...
BECAUSE IT'S A *FANTASY*. A *DEADLY* FANTASY THE MINUTE THE WRONG PEOPLE FIND OUT SHE'S *MRS. SUPERMAN*.
THE ONLY THING MORE FOOLISH WOULD BE TO TAKE A *CHILD* UNDER YOUR WING.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU WON'T BE LOOKING FOR A *THIRD* ROBIN?

THAT'S RIGHT. I WON'T LOOK FOR A THIRD ROBIN. BUT I NEVER LOOKED FOR DICK GRAYSON OR JASON TODD, EITHER.
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF-- I COULD HAVE KEPT THEM OUT OF THE ROBIN COSTUME, BUT NOT ANY OTHER COSTUME. THEY ALREADY HAD IT IN THEIR BLOOD.
DICK THRIVED AS ROBIN, CONSTANTLY IMPROVED, MATURED... EVENTUALLY BECAME NIGHTWING. I POINTED THE PATH OUT TO HIM, BUT HE GOT THERE ON HIS OWN.
JASON...
JASON NEVER HAD THAT CHANCE.
I DIDN'T LOOK FOR EITHER OF THEM. THEY FOUND ME.
THEY WERE PART OF MY LIFE BEFORE I EVEN MET THEM.
I FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT LOIS...
WAIT...
YOU HEAR SOMETHING?
A CRY FOR HELP, SOUNDS LIKE...


"...SARAH MULLER!"
DOC WATERS GOT HERE--WAS AWFUL SURPRISED HOW CLOSE I WAS TO BIRTHING!
HE CALLED THE AMBULANCE, THEN WENT INTO THE KITCHEN FOR A DRINK...
...AND COLLAPSED RIGHT THERE ON THE FLOOR!
I COULDN'T DRIVE TO GET HELP! COULDN'T EVEN GET OUT THE DOOR! MY... MY CONTRACTIONS--!
IT'S OKAY, MS. MULLER. EVERYTHING'LL BE FINE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK--JUST WANT TO CHECK ON THE DOCTOR.
HOW IS HE?
NOT GOOD. HOW LONG BEFORE THAT AMBULANCE ARRIVES?
ONLY A FEW MINUTES--BUT I DON'T THINK SARAH'S BABY WILL WAIT THAT LONG. I DON'T EVEN DARE FLY HER TO THE HOSPITAL...
ALL RIGHT--I'LL WORK ON THE DOCTOR. AN EXPECTANT MOTHER WON'T WANT ME LOOMING OVER HER--YOU'LL HAVE TO DELIVER THE BABY.
WE'D BETTER GET TO WORK.
UH...YEAH...

WHAAA
KUFF! GEFF! AAH--!
--ALL THREE SHOULD BE FINE, SUPERMAN.
DOCTOR WATERS ONLY SUFFERED A MILD HEART ATTACK.
IT'S LUCKY YOU WERE HERE. THANKS!
JUST DID WHAT ANYONE ELSE WOULD'VE...
NOW THAT'S A GOOD DAY'S WORK!
I FEEL LIKE CELEBRATING!
YOU LIKE FLAP-JACKS?


CLARK?
THAT YOU I HEAR UP THERE, SON?
YEAH, IT'S ME, PA.
SORRY. I WAS JUST FINDING SOME REGULAR CLOTHES FOR, um...
WAYNE.
WAYNE IT IS, THEN. NICE TO MEET YOU.
IS THAT FLAPJACKS AND BACON I SMELL?
MA! YOU ALWAYS COOK THIS BIG A BREAKFAST FOR YOU AND PA?
OH, I HAD THIS FEELING YOU'D BE BY, CLARK. NOT MUCH IN THIS TOWN SLIPS BY ME!
NOW YOU AND YOUR FRIEND BETTER SIT DOWN AND DIG IN!
OH! I WAS JUST ON THE PHONE WITH EMILY JORGENSON. SHE SAYS SARAH MULLER HAD A BABY!
YEAH. Um... A BOY.
THAT'S WONDERFUL! ANY IDEA WHAT SHE NAMED HIM?

JASON.
AT LEAST, THAT WAS A SUGGESTION.
OH, JASON'S A FINE NAME! A STRONG NAME! DON'T YOU THINK SO... WAYNE, IS IT?
YES...
YES, I HAVE A CERTAIN... FONDNESS FOR JASON MYSELF.
YOU KNOW, WAYNE, CLARK JUST RETURNED FROM A LITTLE TRIP--AND WE'RE MIGHTY GLAD HE'S BACK.
IT'S THE KIND OF TRIP PEOPLE WHO SEE A LITTLE TOO MUCH MISERY--LIKE REPORTERS DO-- THEY NEED TO GO ON IT EVERY SO OFTEN.
JUST TO GET AWAY AND CLEAR THEIR MINDS.
I THINK MOST OF US GO ON TRIPS LIKE THAT, MR. KENT. SOMETIMES TO THE MOST UNEXPECTED PLACES.
WE COME BACK... WITH A LITTLE BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE, IF WE'RE LUCKY.
COULDN'T AGREE MORE, WAYNE. COULDN'T AGREE MORE.
HERE'S TO THE LITTLE JOURNEYS, THEN...
...AND THE GRAND DETOURS!
END YEAR SEVEN.

SUPERMAN... I HAVEN'T REALLY HAD THE CHANCE TO TELL YOU... IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK!

IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK, MAGGIE. I MISSED METROPOLIS.

YOU'VE CERTAINLY MADE UP FOR LOST TIME! AS A POLICE OFFICER, I CAN THANK YOU FOR SAVING THE CITY FROM THAT GIANT ROBOT.* BUT AS A MOTHER...

...I CAN NEVER THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR SAVING MY DAUGHTER.**

MAGGIE, THAT'S NOT NECESSARY.

* ACTION COMICS # 643
** SUPERMAN # 34

I HAVE TO TRY ANYWAY. TWICE NOW YOU'VE SAVED JAMIE FROM A TERRIBLE END.

AND HOW MANY LIVES HAVE YOU SAVED, CAPTAIN?

WE ALL DO WHAT WE CAN.

THE SIX BOROUGHS OF METROPOLIS ARE HOME TO ELEVEN MILLION PEOPLE.

AMONG THEM DWELLS ONE VERY SPECIAL MAN... A MAN WHO POSSESSES POWERS AND ABILITIES FAR BEYOND THOSE OF MERE MORTALS.

THIS IS THE STORY OF HIS NEVER-ENDING BATTLE...

THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN

Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER

WOW...

...LOOK AT HIM GO! I WONDER HOW IT *FEELS*... TO BE ABLE TO FLY?!

I WONDER WHAT HE DOES WHEN HE'S NOT OUT SAVING THE WORLD!

I KNOW WHAT I'D DO...

"...I'D JUST KEEP FLYING... AROUND AND AROUND THE WORLD!"

"BUT EVEN SUPERMAN GETS TIRED AND HUNGRY... DOESN'T HE? SO, WHERE DOES HE GO TO RELAX?"

THIS IS ONE OF THE THINGS I MISSED MOST DURING THOSE LONG WEEKS IN SPACE...

...A PLACE TO JUST KICK BACK AND BE PLAIN OLD *CLARK KENT* AGAIN!

IT'S GOOD TO BE--!

30

GREAT SCOTT!

AAAGH!!

WHAT IS IT, DEAR? WHAT'S WRONG -- WAS THE SOUP TOO HOT?!

IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN, MA! IT'S HAPPENING ALL OVER AGAIN!

ECHOES

GEORGE PÉREZ - PLOTTER * ROGER STERN - SCRIPTER * DAN JURGENS - LAYOUTS * TY TEMPLETON - FINISHES
ALBERT DE GUZMAN - LETTERER * GLENN WHITMORE - COLORIST * JON PETERSON - ASSOC. EDITOR
MIKE CARLIN - EDITOR

WHAT IS--?

THE *EXPLOSION*! I... I WAS IN MY APARTMENT, AND EVERYTHING EXPLODED, ONLY THERE WAS NO NOISE... JUST LIKE *BEFORE*!

BUT... I AM NOT IN METROPOLIS...

... I AM BACK IN *SMALLVILLE* WITH YOU AND PA AND LANA. NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE.

WHAT'S ALL THE COMMOTION?

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

I-I AM NOT CERTAIN. I SUDDENLY FELT I WAS BACK IN THE CITY...

YOU WERE DREAMING, YOU MEAN?

I WASN'T ASLEEP, PA.

THAT'S RIGHT, JONATHAN.

YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT THIS PAST WEEK, *MATRIX*. YOU PROBABLY JUST *IMAGINED* IT.

BUT, LANA... IT FELT SO *REAL*.

WELL, THE MIND CAN PLAY TRICKS ON US WHEN WE'RE WORN OUT. BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS SET BACK IN BED AND GET SOME MORE REST.

A-ALL RIGHT, PA.

MARTHA, WHEN DID MATRIX START CALLING JONATHAN "PA?"

OH, DEAR... I'M NOT SURE.

AND HE'S BEEN CALLING ME "MA!" HE LOOKS SO MUCH LIKE CLARK... IT SEEMED SO *NATURAL*.

IT *WAS* SO REAL, THOUGH. I CAN--

--HARDLY BELIEVE I JUST *IMAGINED* IT!

BUT I MUST HAVE... THE APARTMENT IS JUST THE WAY I LEFT IT THIS MORNING... NOTHING OUT OF PLACE... THE NEW DOOR'S INTACT.

!HMMPH! SOMETHING MUST'VE 'KEYED THE MEMORY OF THAT STRANGE EXPLOSION MATRIX SET OFF THE OTHER DAY.

IT SEEMED SO *VIVID*, THOUGH. AND FOR A MOMENT, IT WAS ALMOST AS IF *I* WAS CAUGHT IN THE FORCE OF THE EXPLOSION...

...AS IF I WERE SEEING IT FROM MATRIX'S POINT OF VIEW. NOW WHY--?

'EVENING, CLARK! IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

EH? OH, NO, ANDREA. I WAS JUST LOST IN THOUGHT.

I GUESS YOU'RE ALLOWED! IT'S SUCH A RELIEF TO *SEE* YOU AGAIN!

DID THEY EVER FIND OUT WHO WAS KILLED IN YOUR APARTMENT ...THE MAN POLICE THOUGHT WAS YOU?*

*CIRCA ISSUE #451

THEY THINK IT WAS SOME PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, BUT NO ONE CAN TELL ME WHAT HE WAS DOING HERE!

WELL, AS LONG AS *YOU'RE* OKAY! I'D HATE TO LOSE A GOOD NEIGHBOR!

'TAH!

WHAT *WAS* A P.I. DOING IN MY APARTMENT?

MUSEUM OF MODER

A NUMBER OF STRANGE THINGS HAPPENED WHILE I WAS AWAY... THINGS THAT I REALLY MUST LOOK INTO...

...BUT THAT CAN WAIT ANOTHER DAY. I HAVE A FULL EVENING AHEAD OF ME--

--AND I CAN USE A LITTLE *DOWN TIME*! SURELY, THE WORLD CAN SPARE ME A FEW MINUTES FOR MYSELF!

RRRING

MAYBE NOT

HELLO, CLARK KENT.

LANA -- HOW ARE YOU? I MEANT TO DROP IN AND SEE YOU WHEN I WAS LAST IN SMALLVILLE, BUT... WELL, I WAS IN A BIT OF A *RUSH*.

I UNDERSTAND, CLARK...

...AH... I'M CALLING FROM YOUR FOLKS' PLACE.

WHAT?! ARE THEY *ALL RIGHT?* IS SOMETHING WRONG?

OH, THEY'RE BOTH FINE. BUT... WELL...

...THEY'VE BEEN A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT THEIR... NEW *BOARDER*. THEY *MAY* LEARN SOME NEW *TRICKS* LOOKING AFTER HIM -- HE HASN'T BEEN HIMSELF LATELY...

...IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

YES, I THINK *SO*. I *KNOW* THE "BOARDER" --

-- HE'S A SURPRISING FELLOW.

IT WAS CERTAINLY A SURPRISE TO DISCOVER THAT MATRIX HAD TAKEN ON THE FORM OF CLARK KENT! IT WAS JUST LUCK THAT MY FRIENDS ASSUMED "CLARK'S" CONFUSED STATE TO BE THE RESULT OF A CRIMINAL ATTACK!

"I HAD HOPED THAT, AFTER I FLEW MATRIX BACK TO SMALLVILLE, THE FOLKS COULD CONVINCE HIM TO CHANGE BACK. THE LAST THING I WANT IS FOR PEOPLE TO NOTICE TWO CLARK KENTS WALKING AROUND!"

HE'S NOT GIVING MA AND PA ANY *TROUBLE*, I HOPE?

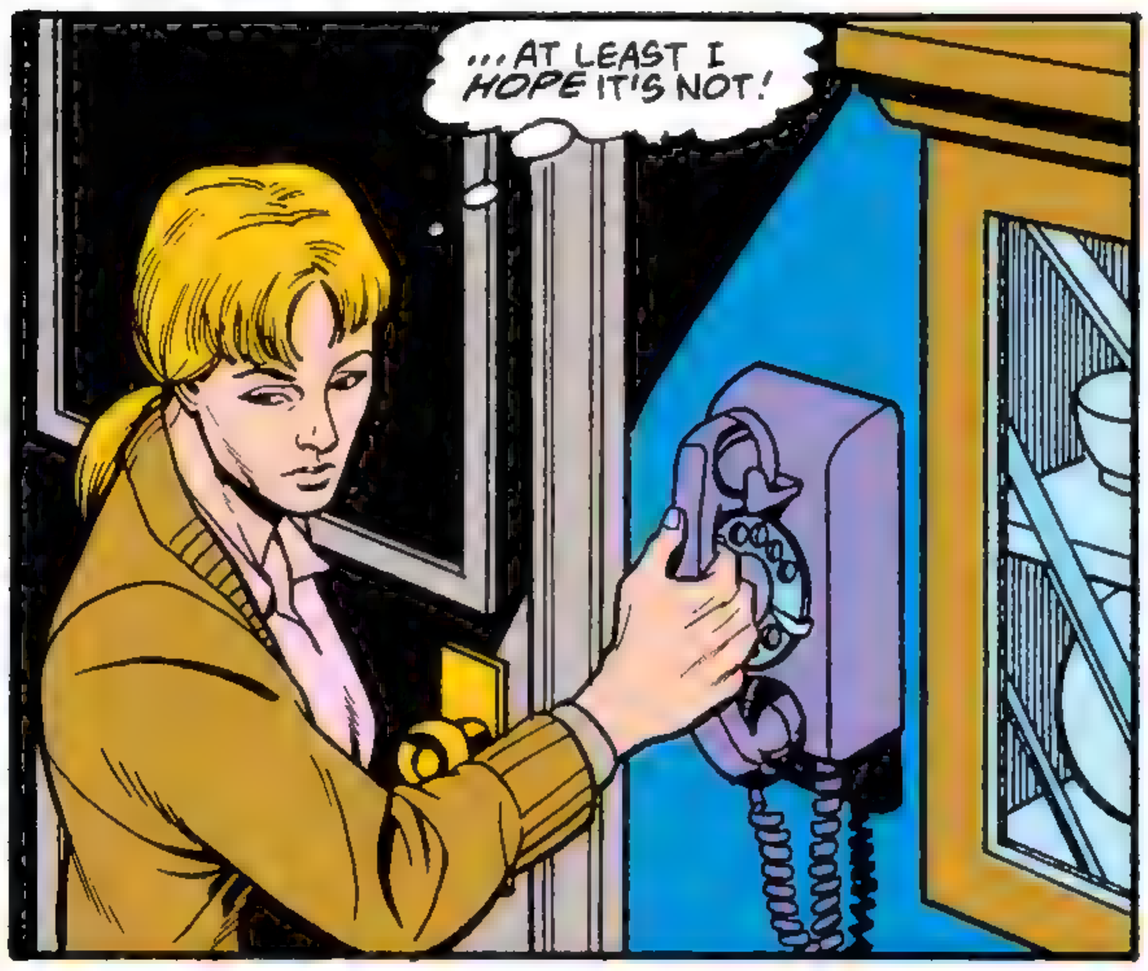
NO... NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT. I'M JUST AFRAID THAT HE MIGHT TURN OUT TO BE MORE THAN THEY CAN HANDLE, EVEN WITH MY HELP.

I THOUGHT THAT IF YOU WERE HEADING OUT THIS WAY ANY TIME SOON, *YOU* COULD TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM.

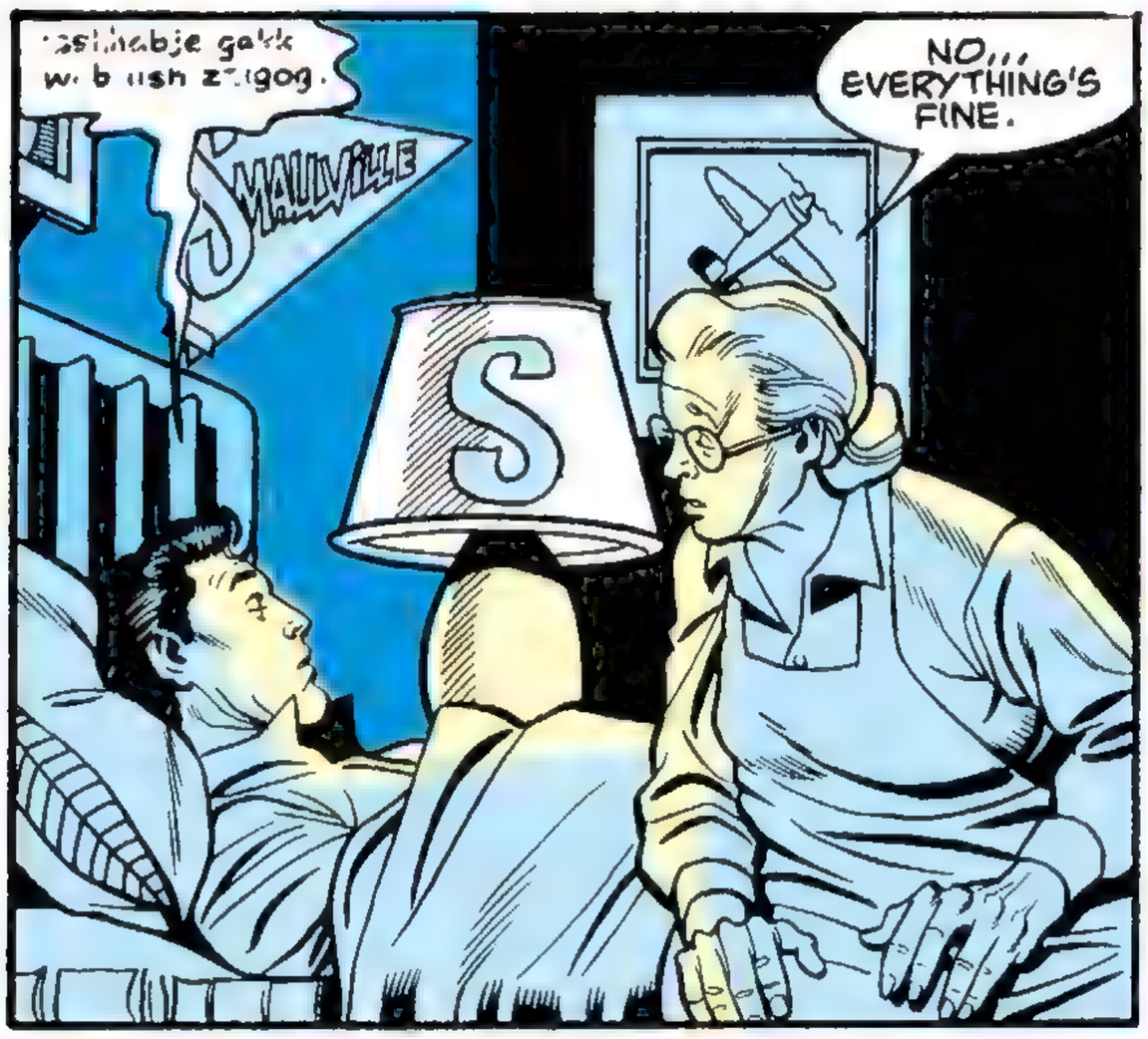
I'LL TRY, LANA.

I'D FLY OUT THERE RIGHT NOW --

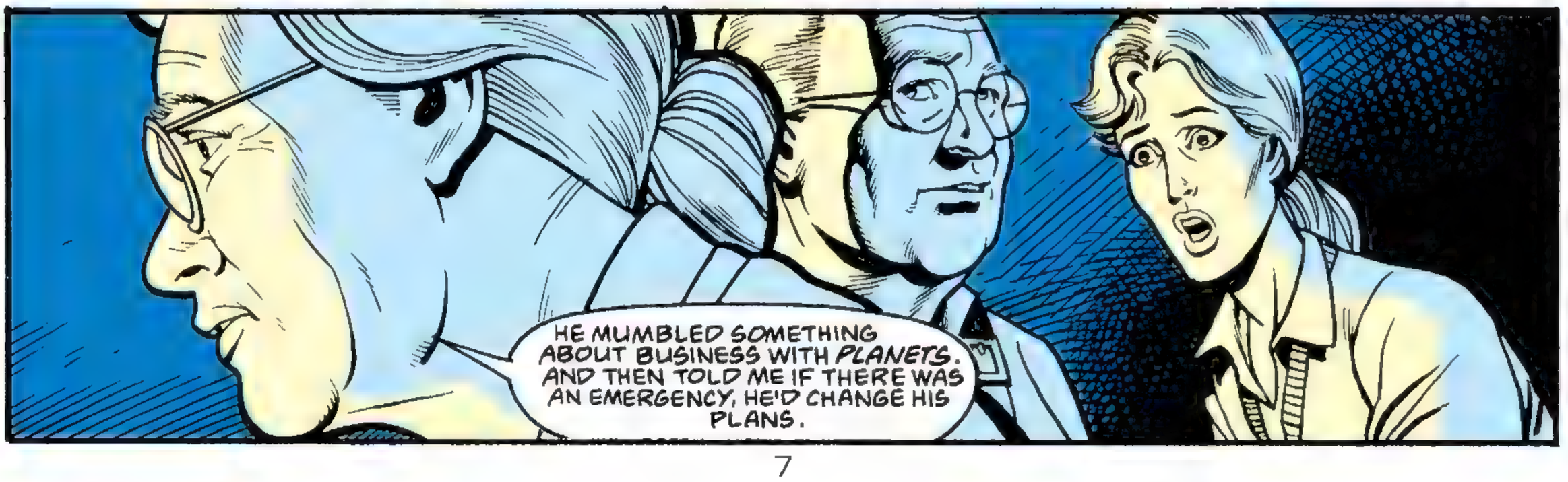
--BUT THERE'S A FUNCTION I MUST ATTEND TONIGHT... DAILY PLANET BUSINESS! OF COURSE, IF IT'S AN EMERGENCY, I'LL CHANGE MY PLANS.
NO... NO, I DON'T THINK IT'S ANYTHING THAT URGENT...


...AT LEAST I HOPE IT'S NOT!

THERE, NOW... YOU JUST CLOSE THOSE EYES AND RELAX.
WHAT WAS THAT, DEAR?


SMALLVILLE
NO... EVERYTHING'S FINE.

WHAT'D HE SAY, MARTHA?
I'M NOT QUITE SURE.


HE MUMBLED SOMETHING ABOUT BUSINESS WITH PLANETS. AND THEN TOLD ME IF THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY, HE'D CHANGE HIS PLANS.

I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE TIME TO TALK WITH MATRIX WHEN I TOOK HIM HOME TO MA AND PA... I SHOULDN'T HAVE JUST DUMPED THIS IN THEIR LAPS...

...BUT THINGS WERE SO *HECTIC* AROUND HERE! I WONDER WHAT MATRIX'S PROBLEM IS? HE DIDN'T APPEAR TO HAVE SUFFERED ANY SERIOUS *INJURIES*, BUT MAYBE I MISSED SOMETHING.

I FEEL RESPONSIBLE... I LEFT THE *ERADICATOR* OUT IN PLAIN SIGHT ON THE SHELF!

I SHOULD'VE *LOCKED UP* THE INFERNAL THING RIGHT FROM THE START--

-- BUT, I DIDN'T EXPECT ANYONE TO WALTZ INTO MY APARTMENT, PICK IT UP, AND SET OFF AN *EXPLOSION*!

"AND I CERTAINLY WASN'T EXPECTING TO FIND A *DOUBLE* FOR MYSELF AT THE CENTER OF THAT BLOW-UP!

"I THOUGHT I WAS HALLUCINATING, UNTIL A MICROSCOPIC VISION-CHECK SHOWED ME THAT IT WAS MATRIX.

"WHEN HE CAME TO, HE COULDN'T REMEMBER WHAT HE'D DONE. I SUPPOSE I'M LUCKY THE EXPLOSION WASN'T BIGGER... THE ERADICATOR'S SO BLASTED UNPREDICTABLE...

...THERE'S A LOT I HAVE TO LEARN ABOUT IT YET.

BING-BONG

FILE THAT THOUGHT FOR LATER...

LOIS LANE... YOU'RE THE ONLY WOMAN I KNOW WHO COULD TURN A SLING INTO A FASHION STATEMENT.

WELL, THANK YOU, KENT!

HERE... A LITTLE PEACE OFFERING.

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO--!

I WANTED TO.

CLARK, DURING THAT HORRIBLE WEEK WHEN WE BELIEVED YOU WERE DEAD, I THOUGHT A LOT ABOUT THE DISAGREEMENTS WE'VE HAD.

LOOK, WE'LL PROBABLY ALWAYS BE IN COMPETITION FOR STORIES--

-- BUT WE CAN STILL BE FRIENDS CAN'T WE?

THERE'S NOTHING I'D LIKE BETTER, LOIS.

GOOD. I WAS AFRAID THAT YOU'D AGREED TO ESCORT ME TO THE AWARDS BANQUET OUT OF SOME STUBBORN MIDWESTERN SENSE OF POLITENESS.

YOU WERE... A LITTLE DISTANT LAST WEEK.

LAST WEEK, MY MIND WAS OFF IN SPACE--I'M MUCH BETTER NOW!

GLAD TO HEAR IT! LET'S GO!

HEY, WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?

I DON'T WANT TO MISS A MOMENT OF THE BANQUET...

"... I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO IT FOR MONTHS. EVERYONE IS GOING TO BE THERE!"

WHAT'S THE WORD FROM MANNHEIM?

THE HIT IS ON! OUR TRANSPORT IS ON ITS WAY.

WE HAVE THREE TARGETS--

"--AND THEY'LL ALL BE GATHERED IN ONE PLACE!"

WONDER WOMEN OF THE YEAR
SPONSORED by the WONDER WOMAN FOUNDATION

DORA, DEAR! OVER HERE!

ISN'T THAT JULIANNA BERKOWITZ?

...SURE TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR HER HOSPICE WORK.

NO, REALLY! I HEARD HE DYES IT!

HA-HA HA!

WELL, LOOK WHO JUST WALKED IN!

CLARK! LOIS! COME JOIN US!

ANDRE LeBLANC... FAIRE LA CONNAISSANCE DE LOIS LANE ET CLARK KENT!

CATHERINE... MONSIEUR LE BLANC.

HOW DO YOU DO!

ENCHANTÉ!

SO, LOIS... AFTER YOUR WORK ON THE *INTERGANG EXPOSÉ*, I'LL BET THAT YOU'RE A *SHOO-IN* FOR THE JOURNALISM AWARD!

WHAT WORK? YOU AND CLARK STARTED THE BALL ROLLING ON THAT!

BUT YOU TIED IT ALL TOGETHER, LOIS...

"...THANKS TO YOU AND CAT, INTERGANG SHOULD FIND IT MUCH HARDER TO OPERATE IN THIS CITY!"

THAT'S THE PLACE! BALLROOM'S ON THE TOP FLOOR!

QU'EST-CE QUE C'EST, CATHERINE... INTERGANG? JE NE COMPRENDS PAS.

UH-OH, EXPLAINING THIS COULD BE COMPLICATED. ANYONE KNOW THE FRENCH FOR "ORGANIZED CRIME"?

TRY "CARTEL CRIMINEL!"

CARE TO DANCE, LOIS?

WHY, YES... EXCUSE US.

LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE SOME INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION, SPORT!

EXCUSE ME? OH... YOU MEAN LEBLANC? COME ON, LOIS, THERE WAS NEVER ANYTHING BETWEEN CAT AND ME.

I KNOW. I JUST WANTED TO HEAR YOU SAY IT.

WHY, MS. LANE! I DIDN'T KNOW YOU CARED!

THERE'S A *LOT* YOU DON'T KNOW, MR. KENT.

SUCH AS?

WELL... AH... HOW TO AVOID YOUR PARTNER'S *FEET*?

OH! I'M SORRY, LOIS--

--I HOPE YOU'LL FORGIVE ME!

GUESS I'M OUT OF PRACTICE...

...IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE GONE DANCING.

"YOU'RE NOT TOTALLY AT FAULT, CLARK. THIS SLING COMPLICATES THINGS.

"OH, LOOK! THERE'S THE CHIEF AND HIS WIFE..."

KENT! GOOD TO SEE YOU BACK IN THE SWING OF THINGS!

HELLO, CLARK.

HELLO, PERRY... ALICE. YES, I'M HOPING TO GET BACK TO WORK WHILE THE PUBLIC STILL REMEMBERS MY NAME!

YOU HARDLY HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT, CLARK.

DON'T BE SO SURE ABOUT THAT, GRANT--NO ONE CAN AFFORD TO MISS FILING A COLUMN FOR LONG!

PERRY, DOESN'T THAT YOUNG MAN WORK AT THE *PLANET*?

JIMMY? YES, HE DOES, ALICE. BUT OUR MR. OLSEN IS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY *QUIET* TONIGHT.

OH? PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE A *TALK* WITH THE BOY.

NO, PERRY... LET *ME*. I THINK I KNOW WHAT'S BOTHERING HIM.

JIMMY? CAN WE TALK?

YOU DON'T WANT TO WASTE YOUR TIME WITH A *KID*, CAT.

WHO SAYS I'D BE WASTING TIME?

JIM, I FLIRT A LOT... THAT'S JUST ME. IF I'VE HURT YOU, I'M SORRY... I NEVER MEANT TO.

YEAH, WELL... GUESS I TAKE THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY SOMETIMES. I'VE HAD A LOT ON MY MIND LATELY.

MOM'S BEEN AWAY, AND--!

HOLY COW!!

KREESH

FOONT

GET DOWN!

FAN OUT!

MORE GAS -- I WANT THIS CROWD *IMMOBILIZED!*

YOU GOT IT.

FOONT

NO ONE'S GOING ANYWHERE NOW.

DON'T GET COCKY! I WANT KENT, LANE, AND GRANT FOUND -- AND *KILLED!*

NO PROBLEM...

"...WE ALMOST STEPPED ON ONE OF THEM, MAKING OUR ENTRANCE!"

CAT-KOFF-YOU GOTTA GET UP! RUN!

C'CAN'T...'M SO SLEEPY-

HAH! JUST LIKE SHOOTING FISH IN A...BARREL?

WHA--?!
WHOOA!
S-SUPERMAN!
THIS HAS *INTERGANG* WRITTEN ALL OVER IT! I NEVER THOUGHT THAT EVEN THEY WOULD TRY SOMETHING THIS BRAZEN.
THEIR GAS LOOKS TO BE A SIMPLE *SLEEP-INDUCING AGENT*... IT SHOULD DISSIPATE LONG BEFORE THE AIR IN MY LUNGS IS EXHAUSTED.
THERE APPEARED TO BE AT LEAST A HALF-DOZEN THUGS. NOW WHERE--?
YOU'RE DEAD MEAT, LANE!
NO!!
MURRY'S
SMALLVILLE
COME OUT WITH YOUR *HANDS UP!*
NO!!

YAAAHH!

WHAT IN THE--?! C-CALEB, CALL FOR BACK-UP! HURRY!

YOU'VE MADE--

--A SERIOUS MISTAKE!

WHAM THOOM

WHOO WHOO WHOO

LANA, MATRIX HAS DISAPPEARED AGAIN! AND PA JUST HEARD ON THE *POLICE SCANNER* THAT SOMEONE IS TEARING APART *MURRY'S PLACE*! OH, DO YOU THINK--?

NOW, DON'T GO JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS, MARTHA. YOU AND JONATHAN *STAY PUT*... I'LL GO CHECK IT OUT!

HADN'T YOU HEARD THAT I WAS BACK IN TOWN?

IF YOU THOUGHT YOU'D GET AWAY WITH THIS--

--YOU'RE NOT VERY BRIGHT.

NONE OF YOU!

OWW!

HURT YA, DIDN'T I? INTERGANG COMES PREPARED!

I'M NOT IMPRESSED.

UH,,, L-LOOK, WE'VE GOT A SHIP OUTSIDE, SET TO *EXPLODE* IF WE DON'T GET AWAY!

THUK

HADN'T YOU HEARD THAT I WAS BACK IN TOWN?

IF YOU THOUGHT YOU'D GET AWAY WITH THIS--

--YOU'RE NOT VERY BRIGHT!

NONE OF YOU!

OWW!

S-STAY BACK! I'M WARNING YOU--!

I'M NOT IMPRESSED.

WHUD

THERE'S A SHIP ALL RIGHT... NO ONE ON BOARD... BUT I DO SEE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SIZABLE *SELF-DESTRUCT MECHANISM*, PRIMED AND READY TO GO.

WHERE IS THE SHIP? THERE SHOULD BE A SHIP, BUT I SEE *NOTHING!*

ALL UNITS COPY! WE NEED *HELP!*

THAT TAKES CARE OF THE *DETONATOR*...

I DON'T B'LIEVE IT! THAT *THING* DOVE STRAIGHT THROUGH THE *ROOF O'* THE PLACE!

...AND GETS THE SHIP OUT OF THE WAY! I CAN RETRIEVE IT FROM THE *RIVER BOTTOM* LATER.

I SEE NO BOMB ANYWHERE...

"...ALL SHOULD BE SAFE NOW!"

MY GAWD, WHAT KINDA MONSTER DOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS?

SHERIFF DOBBS? WHERE'S THE SHERIFF?!

H-HE WENT 'ROUND THE BACK! OH LORD...

"...WHAT IF HE'S IN THERE WITH THAT THING?"

SCREECH

OMIGOD! IT LOOKS AS IF A BOMB WENT OFF IN THERE!

MATRIX? MATRIX, ARE YOU IN HERE?!

MATRIX?

MATRIX!!

SUPERMAN... WHY DID SUPERMAN HAVE TO SHOW UP?

'SOKAY... DOESN'T MATTER... I'M *READY* FOR 'IM! THE FIREPOWER IN THIS BABY WILL PUT HIM AWAY FOR GOOD!

DON'T BET ON IT!

YAAAGH!

YOU INTERGANG PUNKS SHOW UP WITH SOME PRETTY *HIGH-TECH GEAR*... AND I DON'T BELIEVE YOU MADE IT YOURSELVES! WHERE DO YOU GET IT?

I... I'M NOT TALKING. YOU CAN'T MAKE ME.

MAYBE... MAYBE NOT. BUT *THIS*.

--WILL NEVER HURT ANYONE!

MATRIX?

-GUAUK-

IT'S ALL OVER!

IT'S ALL OVER!

MATRIX, STOP! FOR GOD'S SAKE, YOU'RE KILLING HIM!

MATRIX, LISTEN TO ME!

MATRIX? WHO'S MATRIX, MA'AM?

WHO'S--? DON'T YOU--? HOW CAN I--?

CLARK! STOP!!

WHAT?!

STRANGEST SENSATION... COULD'VE SWORN I HEARD LANA--

--CALL MY NAME!

I DID! I'M RIGHT HERE!

LANA! I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T EVEN SEE YOU THERE!

I GUESS I JUST HAD TOO MUCH ON MY MIND!

IT'S OKAY... IT'S OKAY. I'M JUST GLAD YOU LET GO OF THAT MAN... YOU COULD'VE KILLED HIM!

OH? I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT HIM... THOSE INTERGANG THUGS ARE A TOUGH BUNCH.

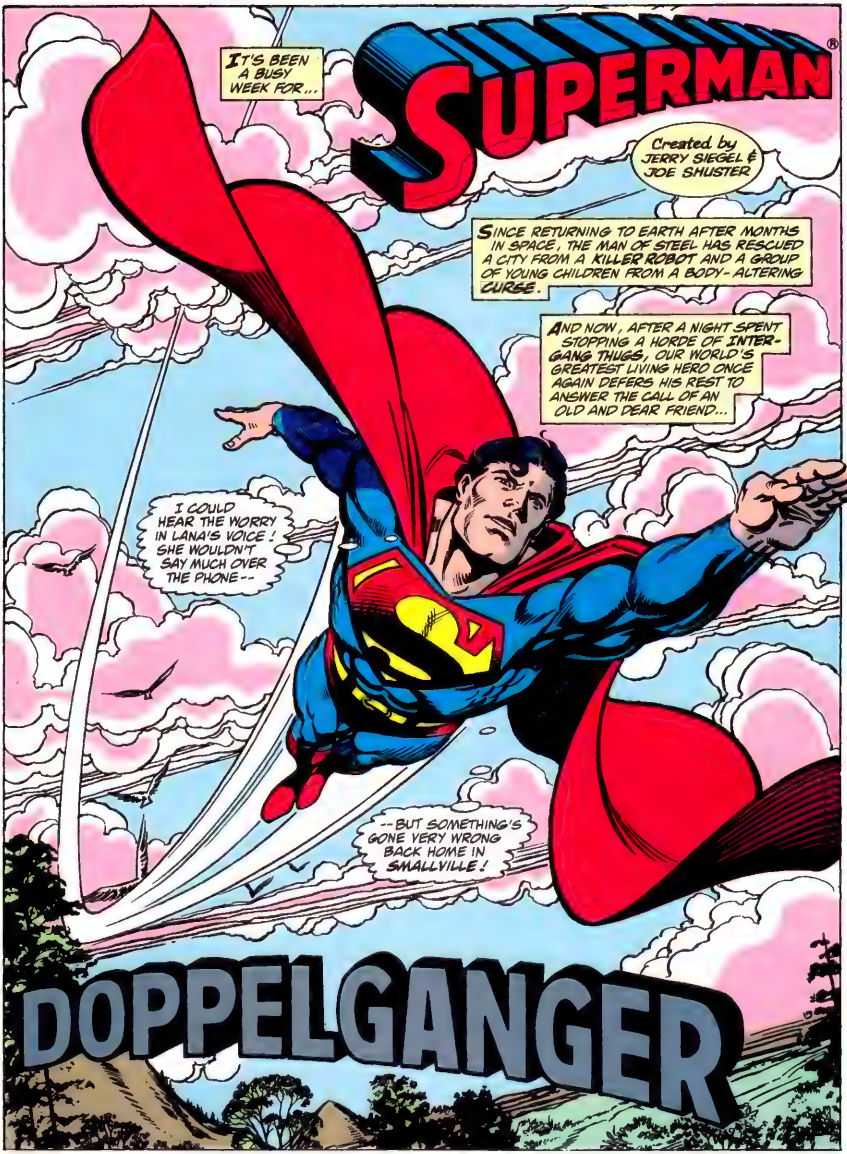
INTERGANG?

UH, LOOK... I THINK WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE, OKAY?

RELAX, LANA... EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE! I WON'T LET ANYONE HARM YOU! I'M HERE TO PROTECT YOU... I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE TO PROTECT YOU!

ALWAYS!

THE STORY OF MATRIX COMES TO A FATEFUL CONCLUSION NEXT WEEK IN ACTION COMICS #644! DON'T MISS IT!


IT'S BEEN A BUSY WEEK FOR...
SUPERMAN
Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER
SINCE RETURNING TO EARTH AFTER MONTHS IN SPACE, THE MAN OF STEEL HAS RESCUED A CITY FROM A KILLER ROBOT AND A GROUP OF YOUNG CHILDREN FROM A BODY-ALTERING CURSE.
AND NOW, AFTER A NIGHT SPENT STOPPING A HORDE OF INTER-GANG THUGS, OUR WORLD'S GREATEST LIVING HERO ONCE AGAIN DEFERS HIS REST TO ANSWER THE CALL OF AN OLD AND DEAR FRIEND...
I COULD HEAR THE WORRY IN LANA'S VOICE! SHE WOULDN'T SAY MUCH OVER THE PHONE--
--BUT SOMETHING'S GONE VERY WRONG BACK HOME IN SMALLVILLE!
DOPPELGANGER

Story by ROGER STERN & GEORGE PÉREZ | Art by GEORGE PÉREZ & BRETT BREEDING | lettering by BILL OAKLEY coloring by GLENN WHITMORE | Assoc. Editor J. PETERSON | Editing by MIKE CARLIN

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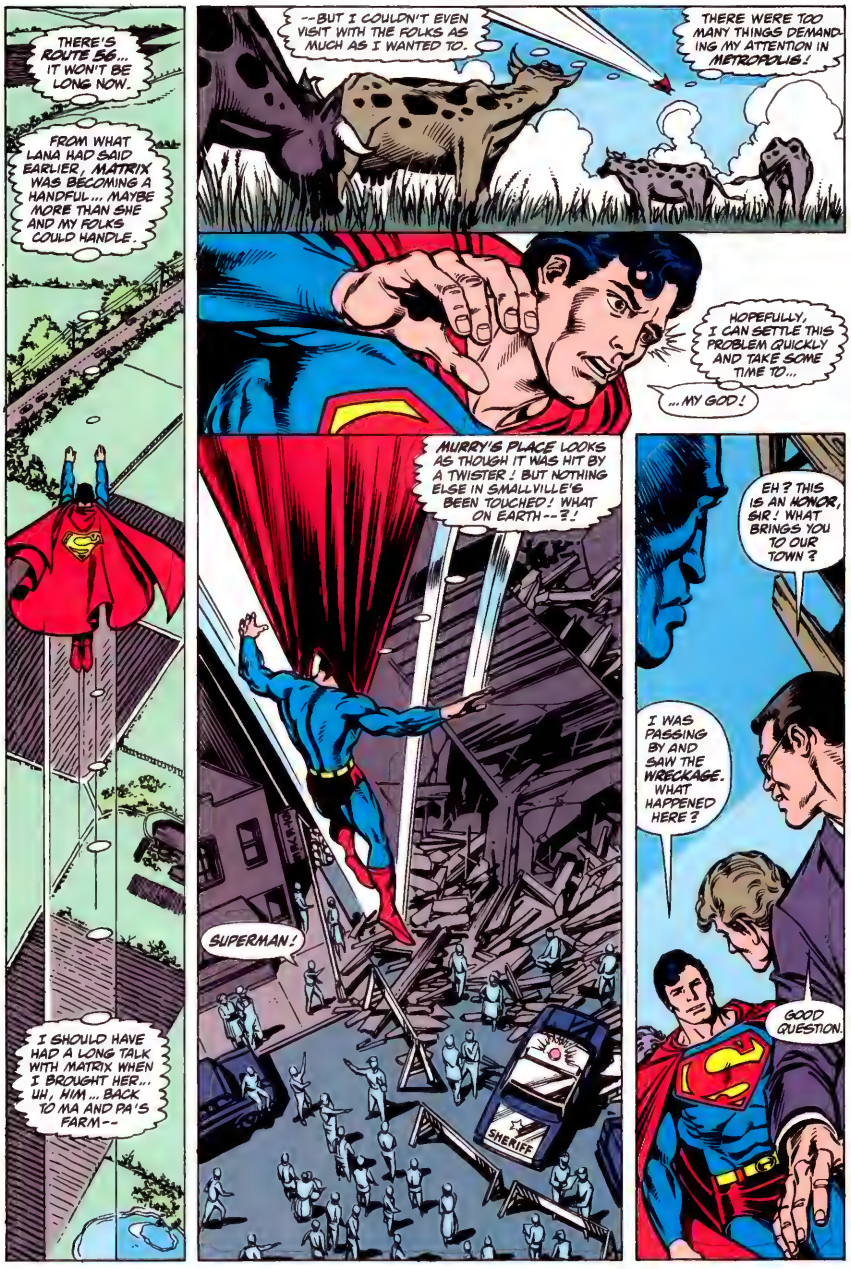
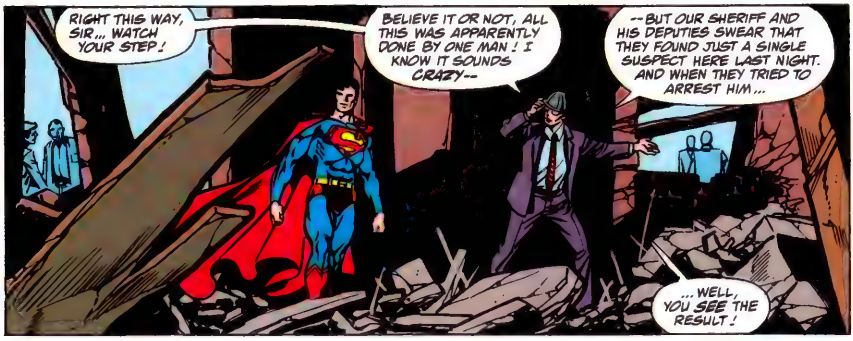
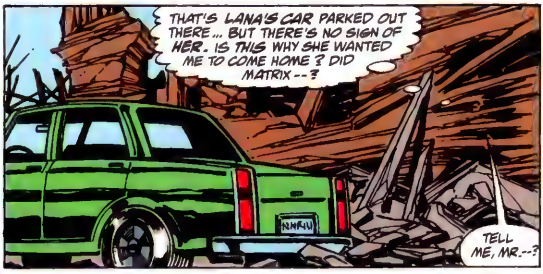
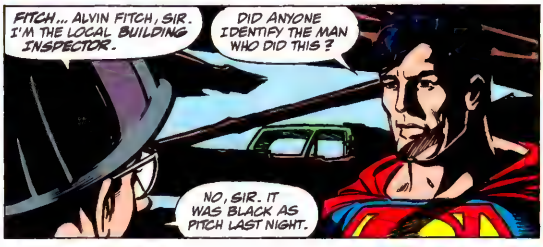

THERE'S ROUTE 56... IT WON'T BE LONG NOW.
FROM WHAT LANA HAD SAID EARLIER, MATRIX WAS BECOMING A HANDFUL... MAYBE MORE THAN SHE AND MY FOLKS COULD HANDLE.
I SHOULD HAVE HAD A LONG TALK WITH MATRIX WHEN I BROUGHT HER... UH, HIM... BACK TO MA AND PA'S FARM--
--BUT I COULDN'T EVEN VISIT WITH THE FOLKS AS MUCH AS I WANTED TO.
THERE WERE TOO MANY THINGS DEMANDING MY ATTENTION IN METROPOLIS!
HOPEFULLY, I CAN SETTLE THIS PROBLEM QUICKLY AND TAKE SOME TIME TO...
...MY GOD!
MURRY'S PLACE LOOKS AS THOUGH IT WAS HIT BY A TWISTER! BUT NOTHING ELSE IN SMALLVILLE'S BEEN TOUCHED! WHAT ON EARTH--?!
SUPERMAN!
SHERIFF
EH? THIS IS AN HONOR, SIR! WHAT BRINGS YOU TO OUR TOWN?
I WAS PASSING BY AND SAW THE WRECKAGE. WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
GOOD QUESTION.

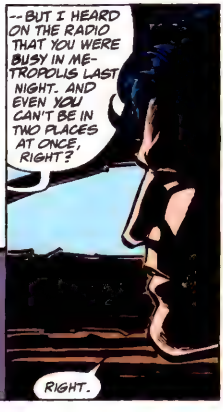

RIGHT THIS WAY, SIR... WATCH YOUR STEP!
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, ALL THIS WAS APPARENTLY DONE BY ONE MAN! I KNOW IT SOUNDS CRAZY--
--BUT OUR SHERIFF AND HIS DEPUTIES SWEAR THAT THEY FOUND JUST A SINGLE SUSPECT HERE LAST NIGHT. AND WHEN THEY TRIED TO ARREST HIM...
...WELL, YOU SEE THE RESULT!

THE SHERIFF AND HIS MEN... ARE THEY--?
THEY'LL BE ON THE MEND FOR A FEW WEEKS, BUT THEY FARED BETTER THAN THE BUILDING.
I SEE.

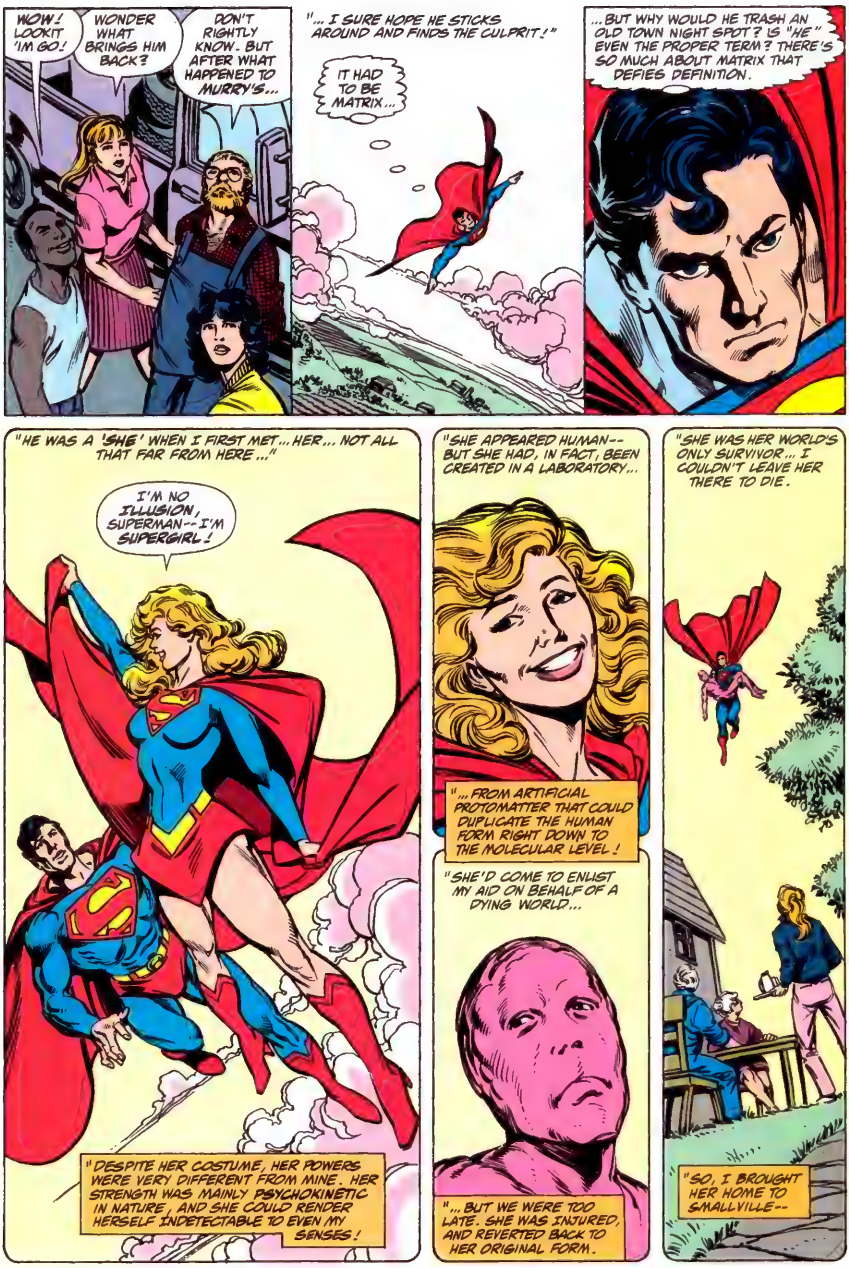

THAT'S LANA'S CAR PARKED OUT THERE... BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF HER. IS THIS WHY SHE WANTED ME TO COME HOME? DID MATRIX--?
TELL ME, MR.--?

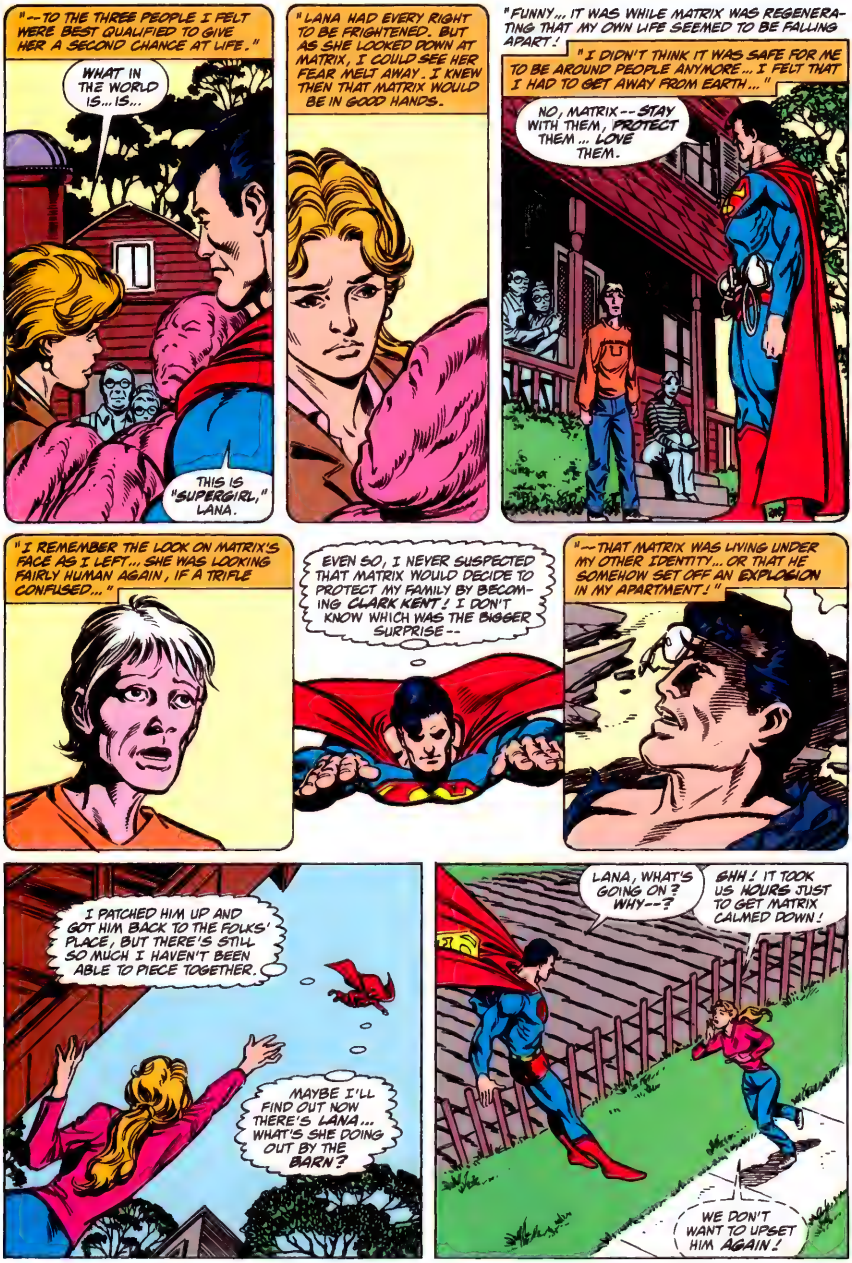

FITCH... ALVIN FITCH, SIR. I'M THE LOCAL BUILDING INSPECTOR.
DID ANYONE IDENTIFY THE MAN WHO DID THIS?
NO, SIR. IT WAS BLACK AS PITCH LAST NIGHT.

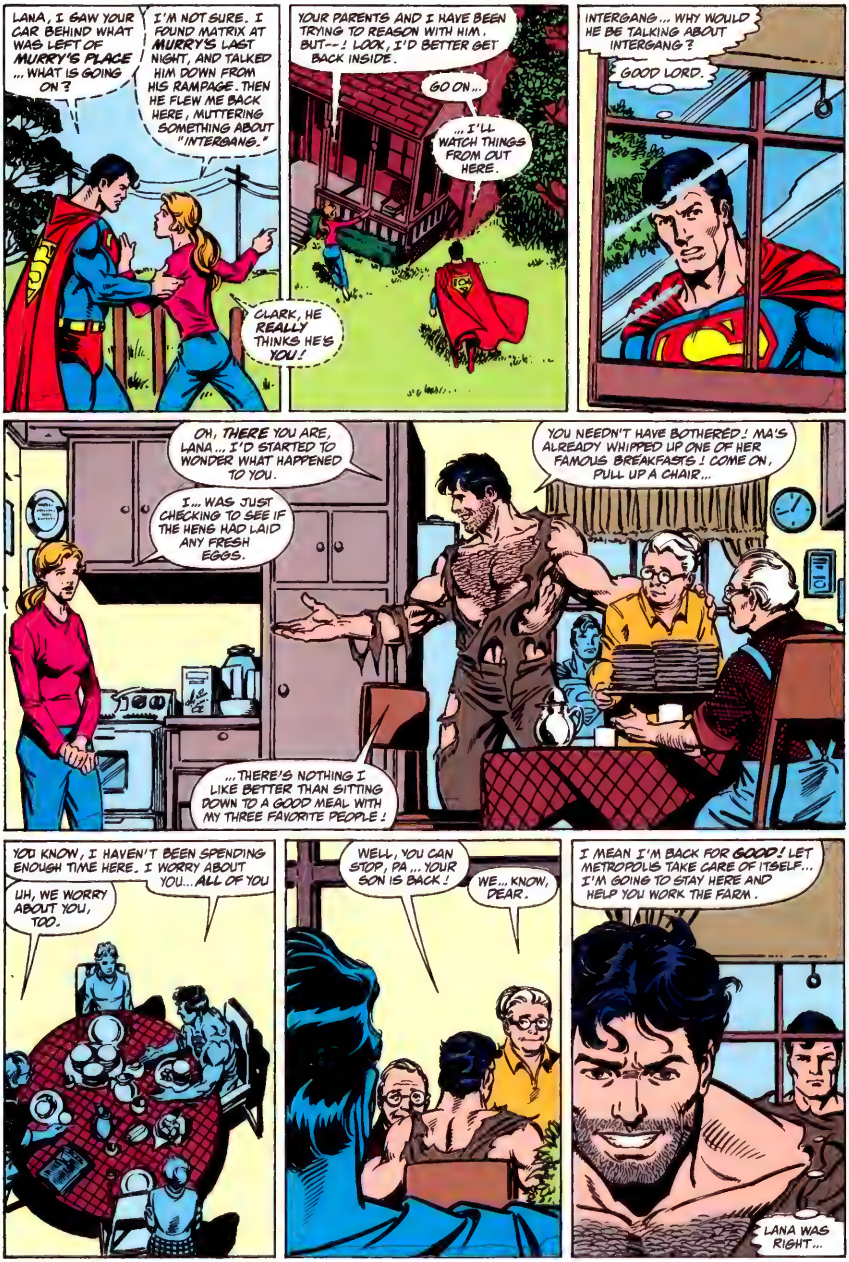
HEH, ONE DEPUTY SAID THAT ONLY SUPERMAN COULDA DONE IT--

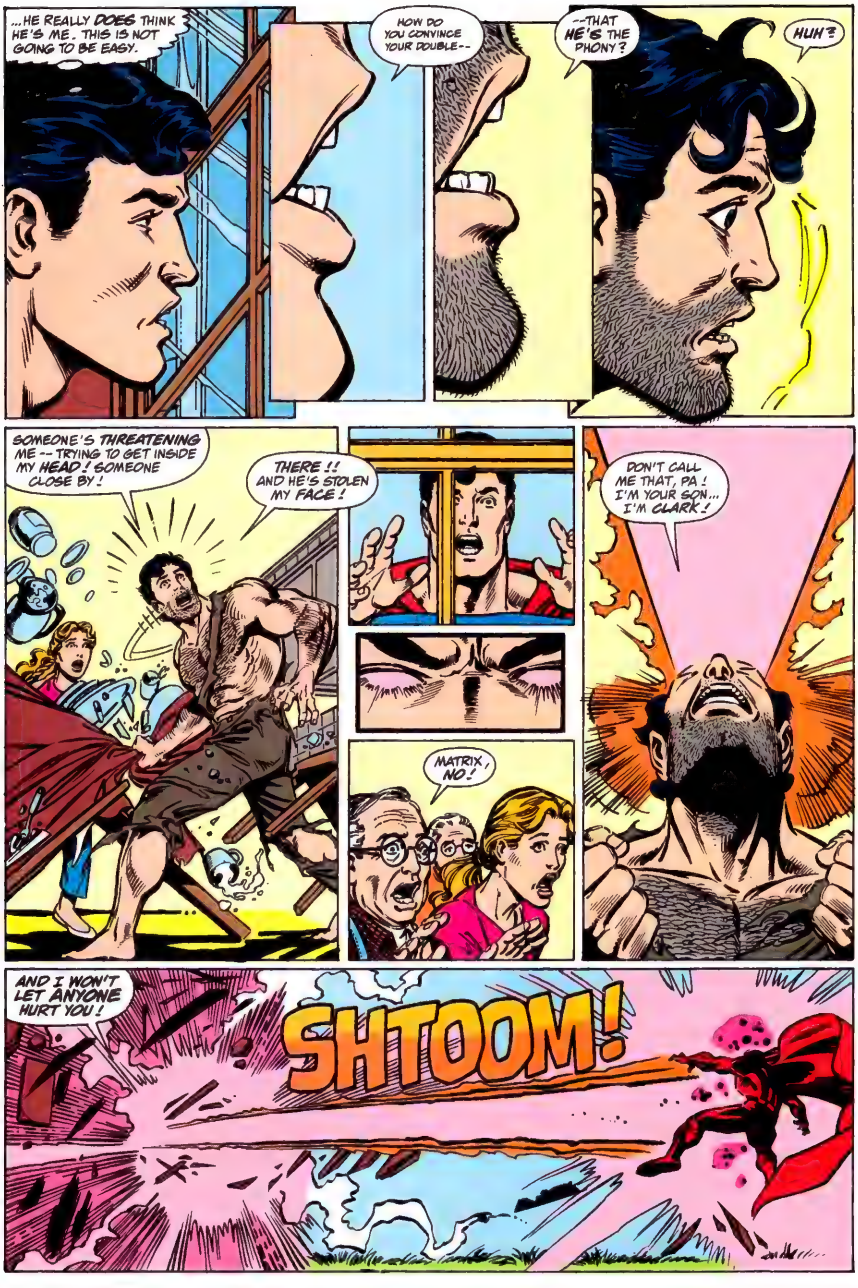

--BUT I HEARD ON THE RADIO THAT YOU WERE BUSY IN METROPOLIS LAST NIGHT. AND EVEN YOU CAN'T BE IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE, RIGHT?
RIGHT.

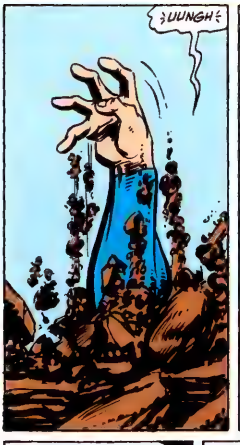
THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYTHING I CAN DO HERE. YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, MR. FITCH.
HEY, YOU EVER NEED ANYTHING IN THESE PARTS, GIVE ME A CALL! YA HEAR?


WOW! LOOKIT 'IM GO!
WONDER WHAT BRINGS HIM BACK?
DON'T RIGHTLY KNOW. BUT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO MURRY'S...
"... I SURE HOPE HE STICKS AROUND AND FINDS THE CULPRIT!"
IT HAD TO BE MATRIX...
...BUT WHY WOULD HE TRASH AN OLD TOWN NIGHT SPOT? IS "HE" EVEN THE PROPER TERM? THERE'S SO MUCH ABOUT MATRIX THAT DEFIES DEFINITION.
"HE WAS A 'SHE' WHEN I FIRST MET... HER... NOT ALL THAT FAR FROM HERE..."
I'M NO ILLUSION, SUPERMAN--I'M SUPERGIRL!
"DESPITE HER COSTUME, HER POWERS WERE VERY DIFFERENT FROM MINE. HER STRENGTH WAS MAINLY PSYCHOKINETIC IN NATURE, AND SHE COULD RENDER HERSELF INDETECTABLE TO EVEN MY SENSES!
"SHE APPEARED HUMAN--BUT SHE HAD, IN FACT, BEEN CREATED IN A LABORATORY...
"... FROM ARTIFICIAL PROTOMATTER THAT COULD DUPLICATE THE HUMAN FORM RIGHT DOWN TO THE MOLECULAR LEVEL!
"SHE'D COME TO ENLIST MY AID ON BEHALF OF A DYING WORLD...
"... BUT WE WERE TOO LATE. SHE WAS INJURED, AND REVERTED BACK TO HER ORIGINAL FORM.
"SHE WAS HER WORLD'S ONLY SURVIVOR... I COULDN'T LEAVE HER THERE TO DIE.
"SO, I BROUGHT HER HOME TO SMALLVILLE--

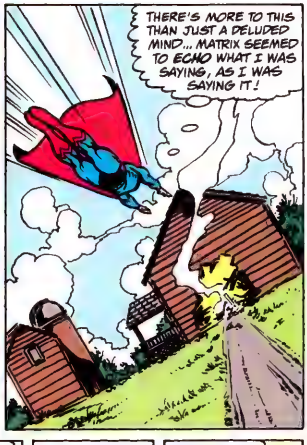

"--TO THE THREE PEOPLE I FELT WERE BEST QUALIFIED TO GIVE HER A SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE."
WHAT IN THE WORLD IS...IS...
THIS IS "SUPERGIRL," LANA.
"LANA HAD EVERY RIGHT TO BE FRIGHTENED. BUT AS SHE LOOKED DOWN AT MATRIX, I COULD SEE HER FEAR MELT AWAY. I KNEW THEN THAT MATRIX WOULD BE IN GOOD HANDS.
"FUNNY... IT WAS WHILE MATRIX WAS REGENERATING THAT MY OWN LIFE SEEMED TO BE FALLING APART!
"I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS SAFE FOR ME TO BE AROUND PEOPLE ANYMORE... I FELT THAT I HAD TO GET AWAY FROM EARTH..."
NO, MATRIX--STAY WITH THEM, PROTECT THEM... LOVE THEM.
"I REMEMBER THE LOOK ON MATRIX'S FACE AS I LEFT... SHE WAS LOOKING FAIRLY HUMAN AGAIN, IF A TRIFLE CONFUSED..."
EVEN SO, I NEVER SUSPECTED THAT MATRIX WOULD DECIDE TO PROTECT MY FAMILY BY BECOMING CLARK KENT! I DON'T KNOW WHICH WAS THE BIGGER SURPRISE--
"--THAT MATRIX WAS LIVING UNDER MY OTHER IDENTITY... OR THAT HE SOMEHOW SET OFF AN EXPLOSION IN MY APARTMENT!"
I PATCHED HIM UP AND GOT HIM BACK TO THE FOLKS' PLACE, BUT THERE'S STILL SO MUCH I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER.
MAYBE I'LL FIND OUT NOW THERE'S LANA... WHAT'S SHE DOING OUT BY THE BARN?
LANA, WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY--?
SHH! IT TOOK US HOURS JUST TO GET MATRIX CALMED DOWN!
WE DON'T WANT TO UPSET HIM AGAIN!

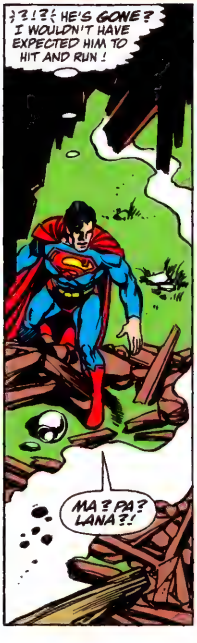

LANA, I SAW YOUR CAR BEHIND WHAT WAS LEFT OF MURRY'S PLACE ... WHAT IS GOING ON?
I'M NOT SURE. I FOUND MATRIX AT MURRY'S LAST NIGHT, AND TALKED HIM DOWN FROM HIS RAMPAGE. THEN HE FLEW ME BACK HERE, MUTTERING SOMETHING ABOUT "INTERGANG."
CLARK, HE REALLY THINKS HE'S YOU!
YOUR PARENTS AND I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO REASON WITH HIM, BUT--! LOOK, I'D BETTER GET BACK INSIDE.
GO ON...
... I'LL WATCH THINGS FROM OUT HERE.
INTERGANG... WHY WOULD HE BE TALKING ABOUT INTERGANG?
GOOD LORD.
OH, THERE YOU ARE, LANA... I'D STARTED TO WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU.
I... WAS JUST CHECKING TO SEE IF THE HENS HAD LAID ANY FRESH EGGS.
YOU NEEDN'T HAVE BOTHERED! MA'S ALREADY WHIPPED UP ONE OF HER FAMOUS BREAKFASTS! COME ON, PULL UP A CHAIR...
...THERE'S NOTHING I LIKE BETTER THAN SITTING DOWN TO A GOOD MEAL WITH MY THREE FAVORITE PEOPLE!
YOU KNOW, I HAVEN'T BEEN SPENDING ENOUGH TIME HERE. I WORRY ABOUT YOU... ALL OF YOU
UH, WE WORRY ABOUT YOU, TOO.
WELL, YOU CAN STOP, PA... YOUR SON IS BACK!
WE... KNOW, DEAR.
I MEAN I'M BACK FOR GOOD! LET METROPOLIS TAKE CARE OF ITSELF... I'M GOING TO STAY HERE AND HELP YOU WORK THE FARM.
LANA WAS RIGHT...


...HE REALLY DOES THINK HE'S ME. THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY.
HOW DO YOU CONVINCE YOUR DOUBLE--
--THAT HE'S THE PHONY?
HUH?
SOMEONE'S THREATENING ME --- TRYING TO GET INSIDE MY HEAD! SOMEONE CLOSE BY!
THERE!! AND HE'S STOLEN MY FACE!
MATRIX, NO!
DON'T CALL ME THAT, PA! I'M YOUR SON... I'M CLARK!
AND I WON'T LET ANYONE HURT YOU!
SHTOOM!


}UUNGH{

NOTHING'S DIMINISHED MATRIX'S POWER--- BUT HE NEVER MANIFESTED A KINETIC EYE-BLAST BEFORE ! THEN AGAIN, HE THINKS HE'S ME...
...THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPT TO SIMULATE HEAT VISION.


THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN JUST A DELUDED MIND... MATRIX SEEMED TO ECHO WHAT I WAS SAYING, AS I WAS SAYING IT!

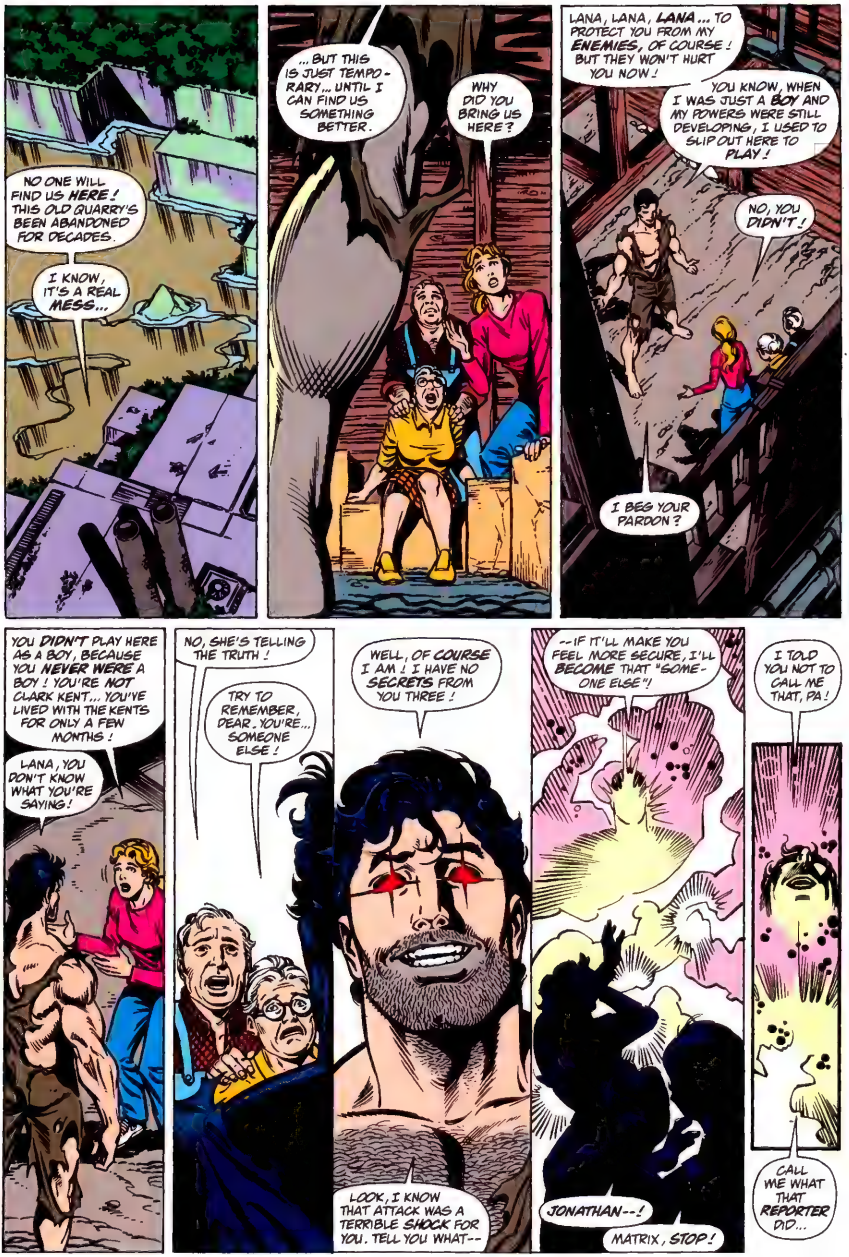

}?!?{ HE'S GONE? I WOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED HIM TO HIT AND RUN !
MA? PA? LANA?!

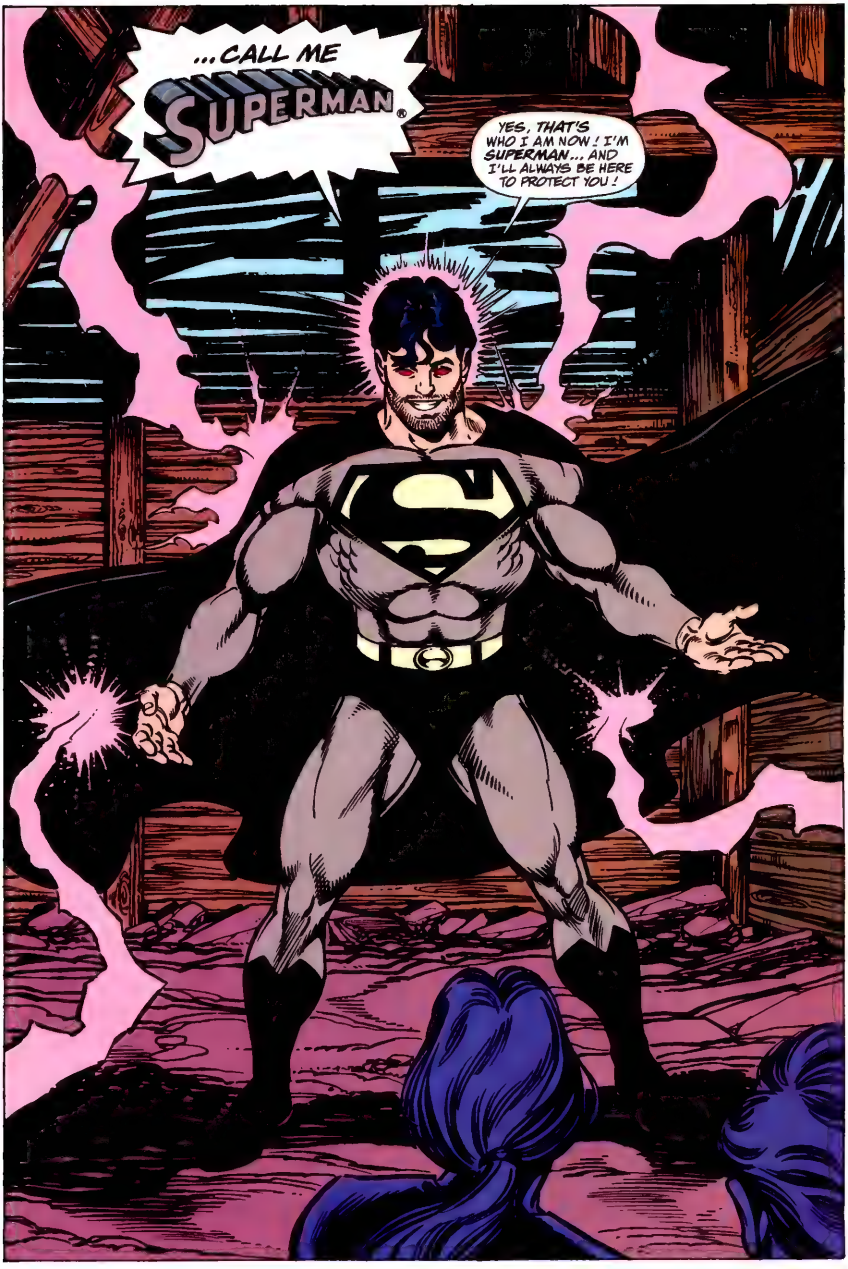
NO SIGN OF THEM... NO SIGN OF ANYBODY, ANYWHERE IN THE HOUSE.

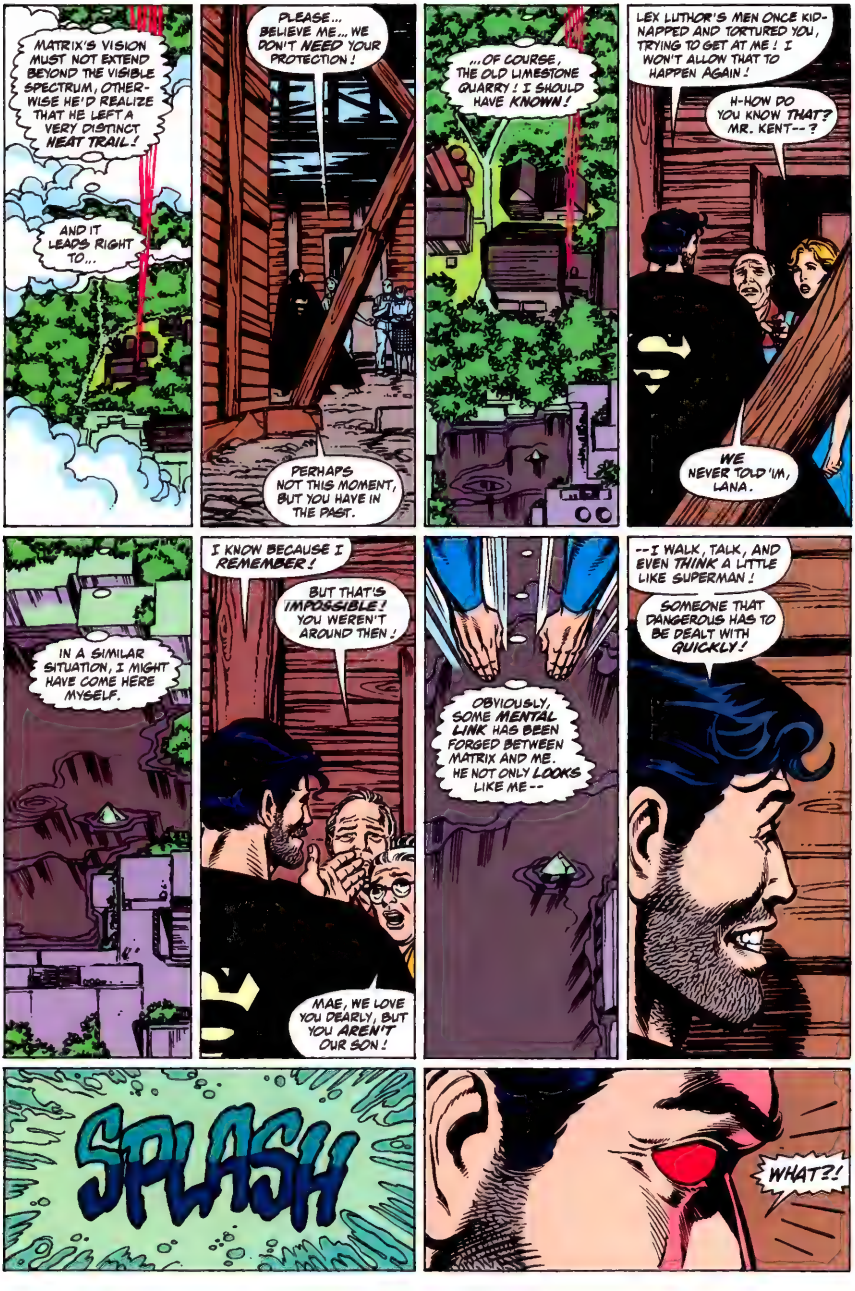
NOTHING LEFT BUT PA'S GLASSES.

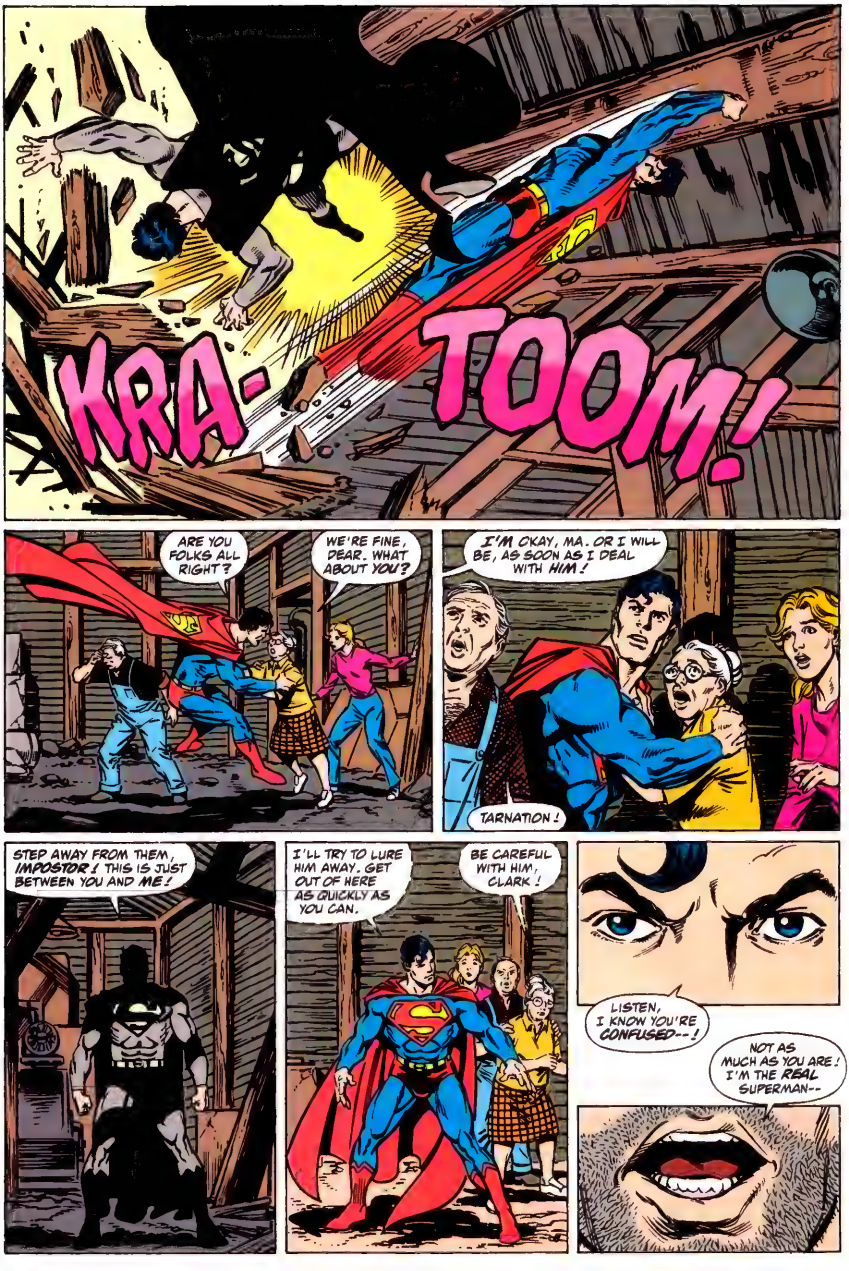
MATRIX TOOK THEM ALL AWAY WITH HIM... BUT WHERE?

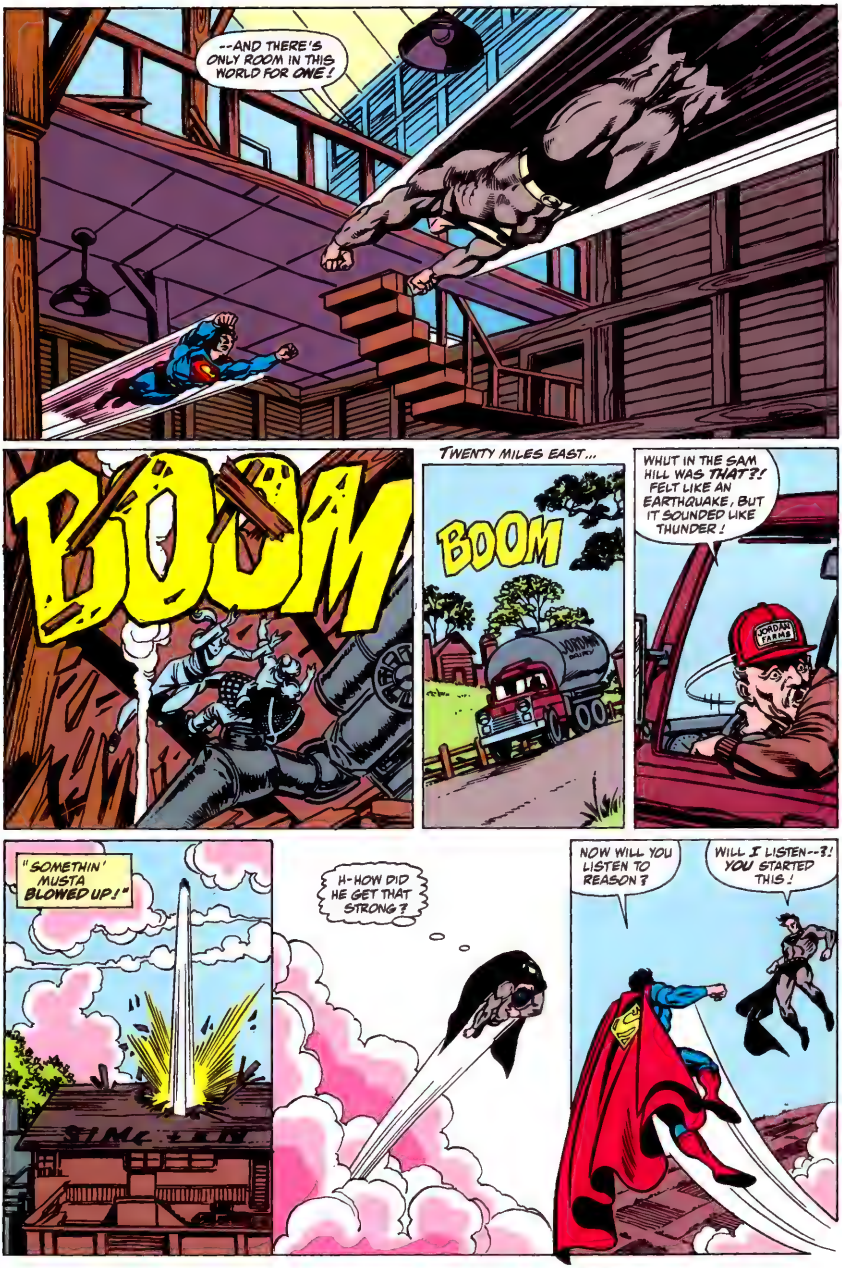
WHERE?!

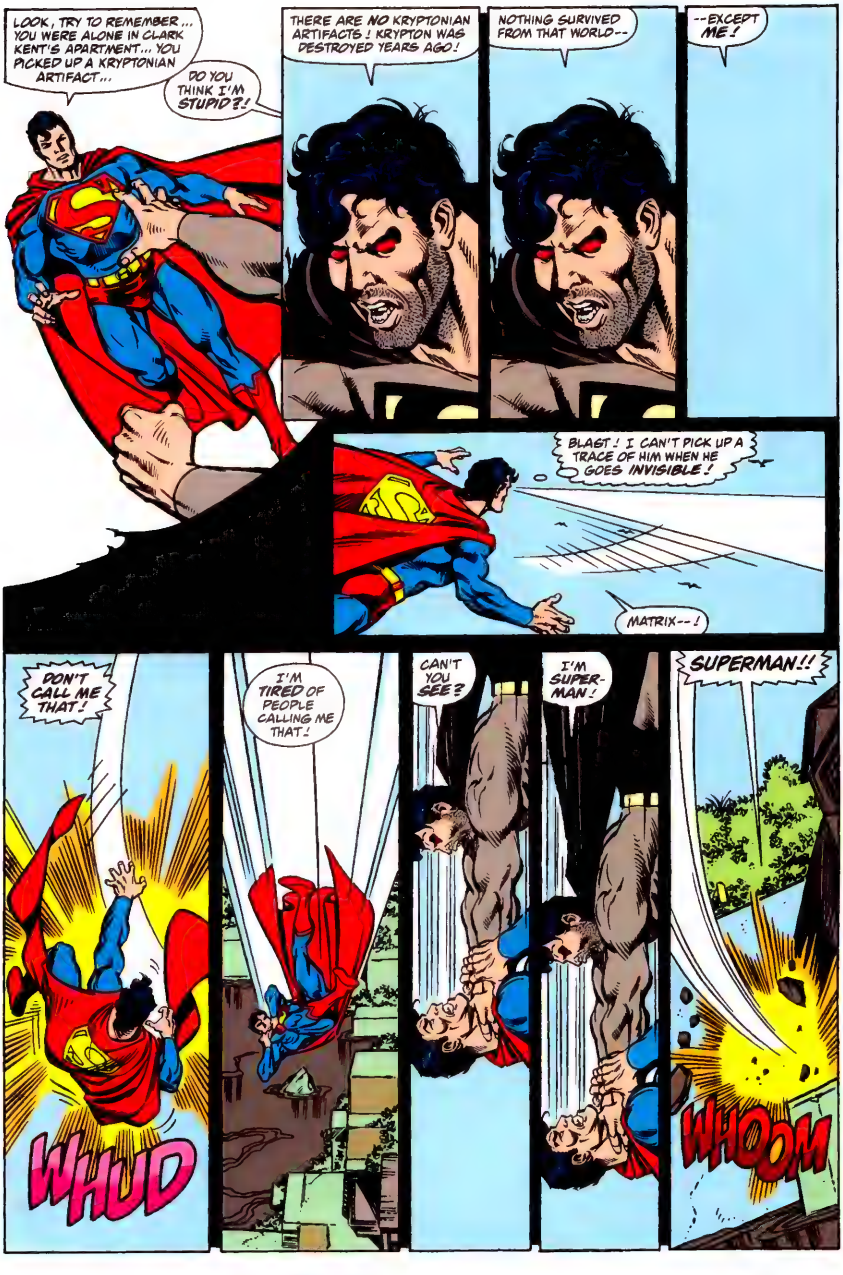

NO ONE WILL FIND US HERE! THIS OLD QUARRY'S BEEN ABANDONED FOR DECADES.
I KNOW, IT'S A REAL MESS...
... BUT THIS IS JUST TEMPORARY... UNTIL I CAN FIND US SOMETHING BETTER.
WHY DID YOU BRING US HERE?
LANA, LANA, LANA... TO PROTECT YOU FROM MY ENEMIES, OF COURSE! BUT THEY WON'T HURT YOU NOW!
YOU KNOW, WHEN I WAS JUST A BOY AND MY POWERS WERE STILL DEVELOPING, I USED TO SLIP OUT HERE TO PLAY!
NO, YOU DIDN'T!
I BEG YOUR PARDON?
YOU DIDN'T PLAY HERE AS A BOY, BECAUSE YOU NEVER WERE A BOY! YOU'RE NOT CLARK KENT... YOU'VE LIVED WITH THE KENTS FOR ONLY A FEW MONTHS!
LANA, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!
NO, SHE'S TELLING THE TRUTH!
TRY TO REMEMBER, DEAR. YOU'RE... SOMEONE ELSE!
WELL, OF COURSE I AM! I HAVE NO SECRETS FROM YOU THREE!
LOOK, I KNOW THAT ATTACK WAS A TERRIBLE SHOCK FOR YOU. TELL YOU WHAT--
--IF IT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL MORE SECURE, I'LL BECOME THAT "SOMEONE ELSE"!
JONATHAN--!
MATRIX, STOP!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME THAT, PA!
CALL ME WHAT THAT REPORTER DID...

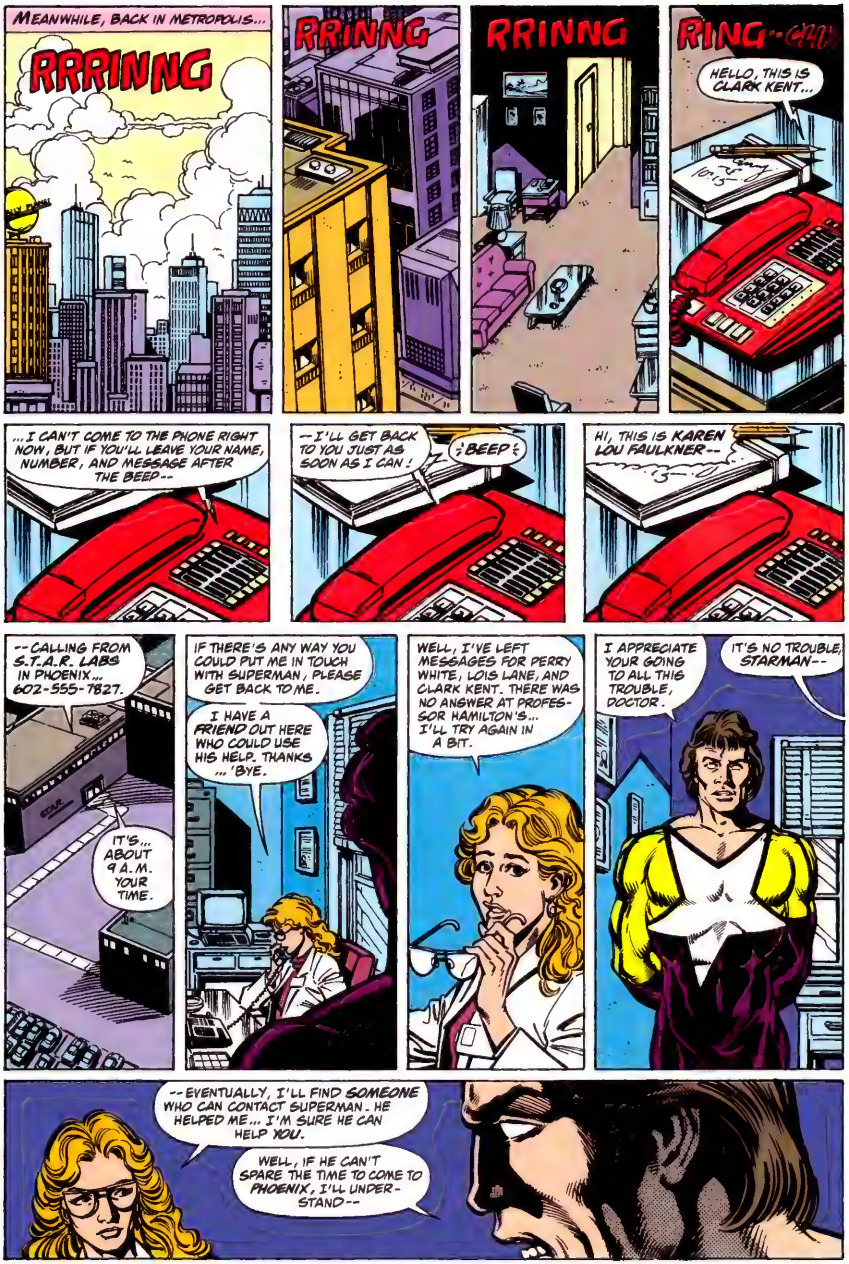

...CALL ME
SUPERMAN
YES, THAT'S WHO I AM NOW! I'M SUPERMAN... AND I'LL ALWAYS BE HERE TO PROTECT YOU!

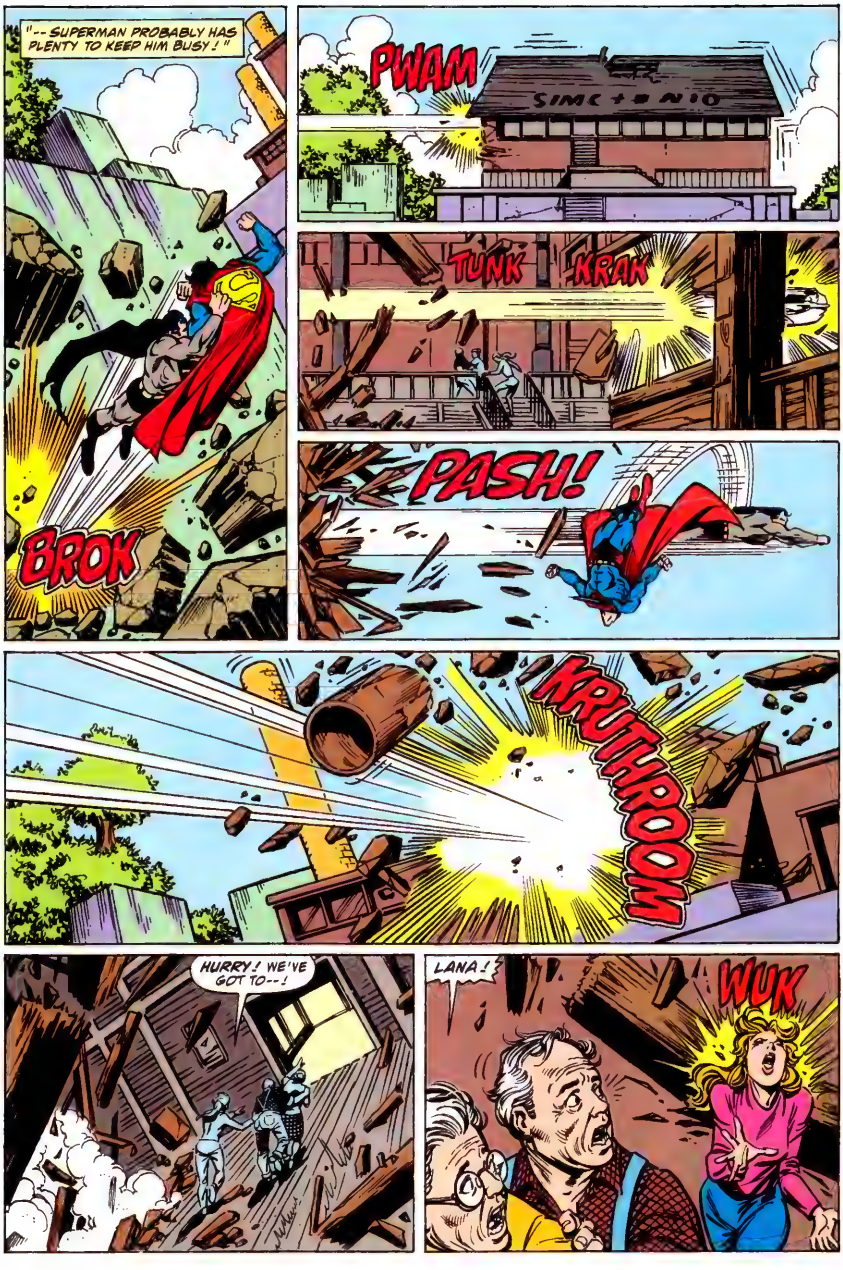

MATRIX'S VISION MUST NOT EXTEND BEYOND THE VISIBLE SPECTRUM, OTHERWISE HE'D REALIZE THAT HE LEFT A VERY DISTINCT HEAT TRAIL!
AND IT LEADS RIGHT TO...
PLEASE... BELIEVE ME... WE DON'T NEED YOUR PROTECTION!
PERHAPS NOT THIS MOMENT, BUT YOU HAVE IN THE PAST.
...OF COURSE, THE OLD LIMESTONE QUARRY! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!
LEX LUTHOR'S MEN ONCE KIDNAPPED AND TORTURED YOU, TRYING TO GET AT ME! I WON'T ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN AGAIN!
H-HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT? MR. KENT--?
WE NEVER TOLD 'IM, LANA.
IN A SIMILAR SITUATION, I MIGHT HAVE COME HERE MYSELF.
I KNOW BECAUSE I REMEMBER!
BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU WEREN'T AROUND THEN!
MAE, WE LOVE YOU DEARLY, BUT YOU AREN'T OUR SON!
OBVIOUSLY, SOME MENTAL LINK HAS BEEN FORGED BETWEEN MATRIX AND ME. HE NOT ONLY LOOKS LIKE ME--
--I WALK, TALK, AND EVEN THINK A LITTLE LIKE SUPERMAN!
SOMEONE THAT DANGEROUS HAS TO BE DEALT WITH QUICKLY!
SPLASH
WHAT?!


KRA-
TOOM!
ARE YOU FOLKS ALL RIGHT?
WE'RE FINE, DEAR. WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I'M OKAY, MA. OR I WILL BE, AS SOON AS I DEAL WITH HIM!
TARNATION!
STEP AWAY FROM THEM, IMPOSTOR! THIS IS JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME!
I'LL TRY TO LURE HIM AWAY. GET OUT OF HERE AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN.
BE CAREFUL WITH HIM, CLARK!
LISTEN, I KNOW YOU'RE CONFUSED--!
NOT AS MUCH AS YOU ARE! I'M THE REAL SUPERMAN--


--AND THERE'S ONLY ROOM IN THIS WORLD FOR ONE!
BOOM
TWENTY MILES EAST...
BOOM
WHUT IN THE SAM HILL WAS THAT?! FELT LIKE AN EARTHQUAKE, BUT IT SOUNDED LIKE THUNDER!
JORDAN FARMS
"SOMETHIN' MUSTA BLOWED UP!"
H-HOW DID HE GET THAT STRONG?
NOW WILL YOU LISTEN TO REASON?
WILL I LISTEN--?! YOU STARTED THIS!


LOOK, TRY TO REMEMBER... YOU WERE ALONE IN CLARK KENT'S APARTMENT... YOU PICKED UP A KRYPTONIAN ARTIFACT...
DO YOU THINK I'M STUPID?!
THERE ARE NO KRYPTONIAN ARTIFACTS! KRYPTON WAS DESTROYED YEARS AGO!
NOTHING SURVIVED FROM THAT WORLD--
--EXCEPT ME!
BLAST! I CAN'T PICK UP A TRACE OF HIM WHEN HE GOES INVISIBLE!
MATRIX--!
DON'T CALL ME THAT!
WHUD
I'M TIRED OF PEOPLE CALLING ME THAT!
CAN'T YOU SEE?
I'M SUPER-MAN!
SUPERMAN!!
WHOOM

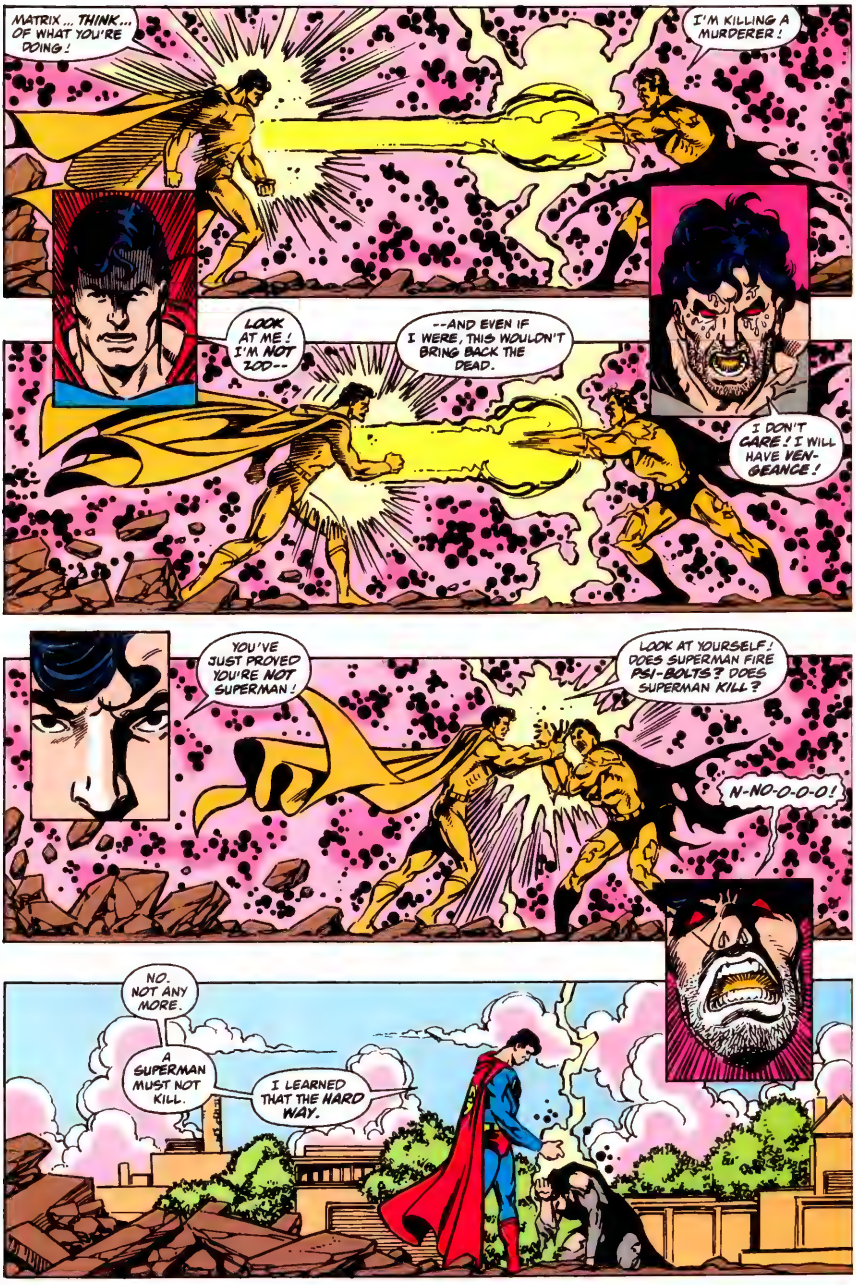

MEANWHILE, BACK IN METROPOLIS...
RRRINNG
RRINNG
RRINNG
RING--CH!
HELLO, THIS IS CLARK KENT...
...I CAN'T COME TO THE PHONE RIGHT NOW, BUT IF YOU'LL LEAVE YOUR NAME, NUMBER, AND MESSAGE AFTER THE BEEP--
--I'LL GET BACK TO YOU JUST AS SOON AS I CAN!
BEEP
HI, THIS IS KAREN LOU FAULKNER--
--CALLING FROM S.T.A.R. LABS IN PHOENIX... 602-555-7827.
IT'S... ABOUT 9 A.M. YOUR TIME.
IF THERE'S ANY WAY YOU COULD PUT ME IN TOUCH WITH SUPERMAN, PLEASE GET BACK TO ME.
I HAVE A FRIEND OUT HERE WHO COULD USE HIS HELP. THANKS ...'BYE.
WELL, I'VE LEFT MESSAGES FOR PERRY WHITE, LOIS LANE, AND CLARK KENT. THERE WAS NO ANSWER AT PROFESSOR HAMILTON'S... I'LL TRY AGAIN IN A BIT.
I APPRECIATE YOUR GOING TO ALL THIS TROUBLE, DOCTOR.
IT'S NO TROUBLE, STARMAN--
--EVENTUALLY, I'LL FIND SOMEONE WHO CAN CONTACT SUPERMAN. HE HELPED ME... I'M SURE HE CAN HELP YOU.
WELL, IF HE CAN'T SPARE THE TIME TO COME TO PHOENIX, I'LL UNDERSTAND--


"-- SUPERMAN PROBABLY HAS PLENTY TO KEEP HIM BUSY!"
BROK
PWAM
TUNK
KRAK
PASH!
KRUTHROOM
HURRY! WE'VE GOT TO--!
LANA!
WUK

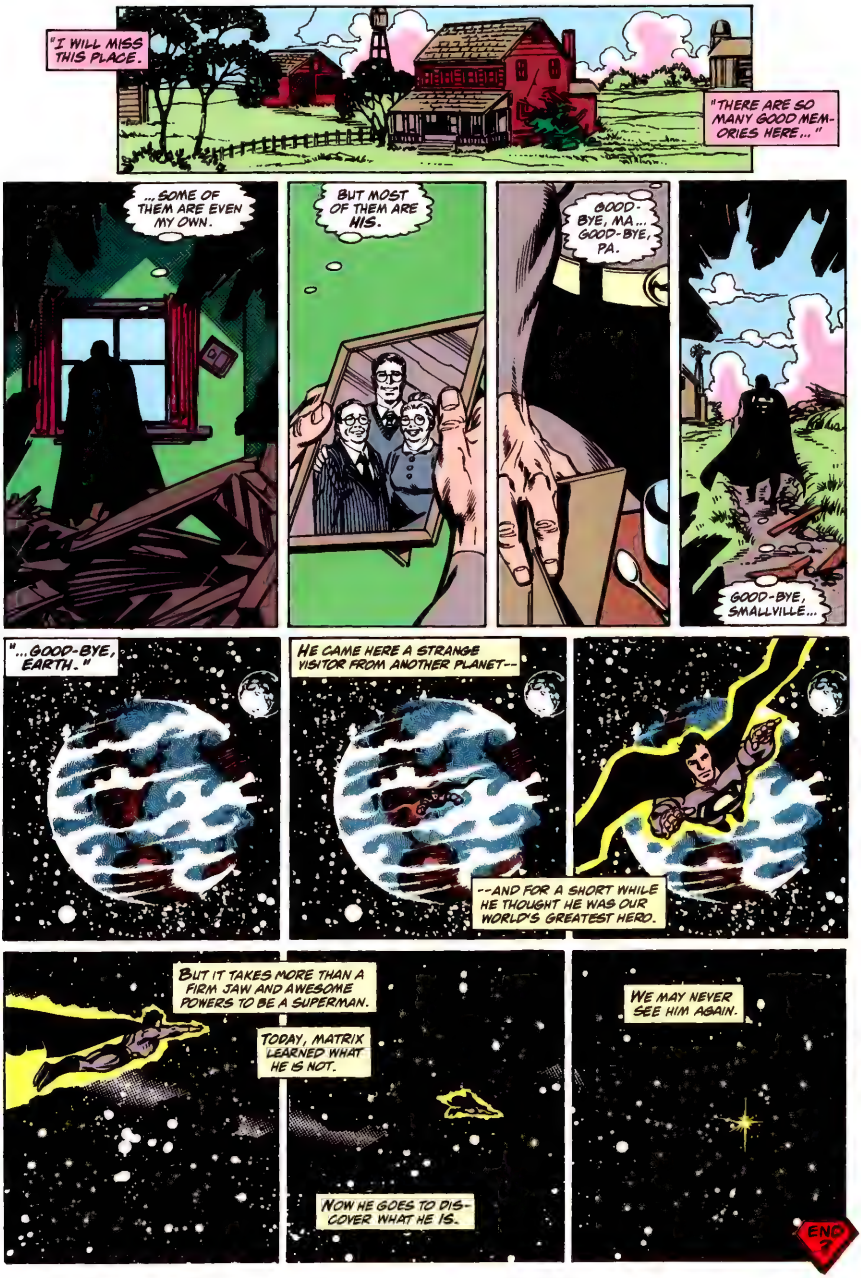
YOU TRICKED ME! YOU HOPED I'D KILL MYSELF!
BUT SUPERMAN CAN'T BE KILLED!
YOU'RE WRONG... ON ALL COUNTS!
KREK
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S WRONG!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'LL DIE!
WHIZZZZZZZ
NO.
WOW
BUHROOM
KREK-KRAKITA
OH, MY LANDS! JONATHAN... HURRY!

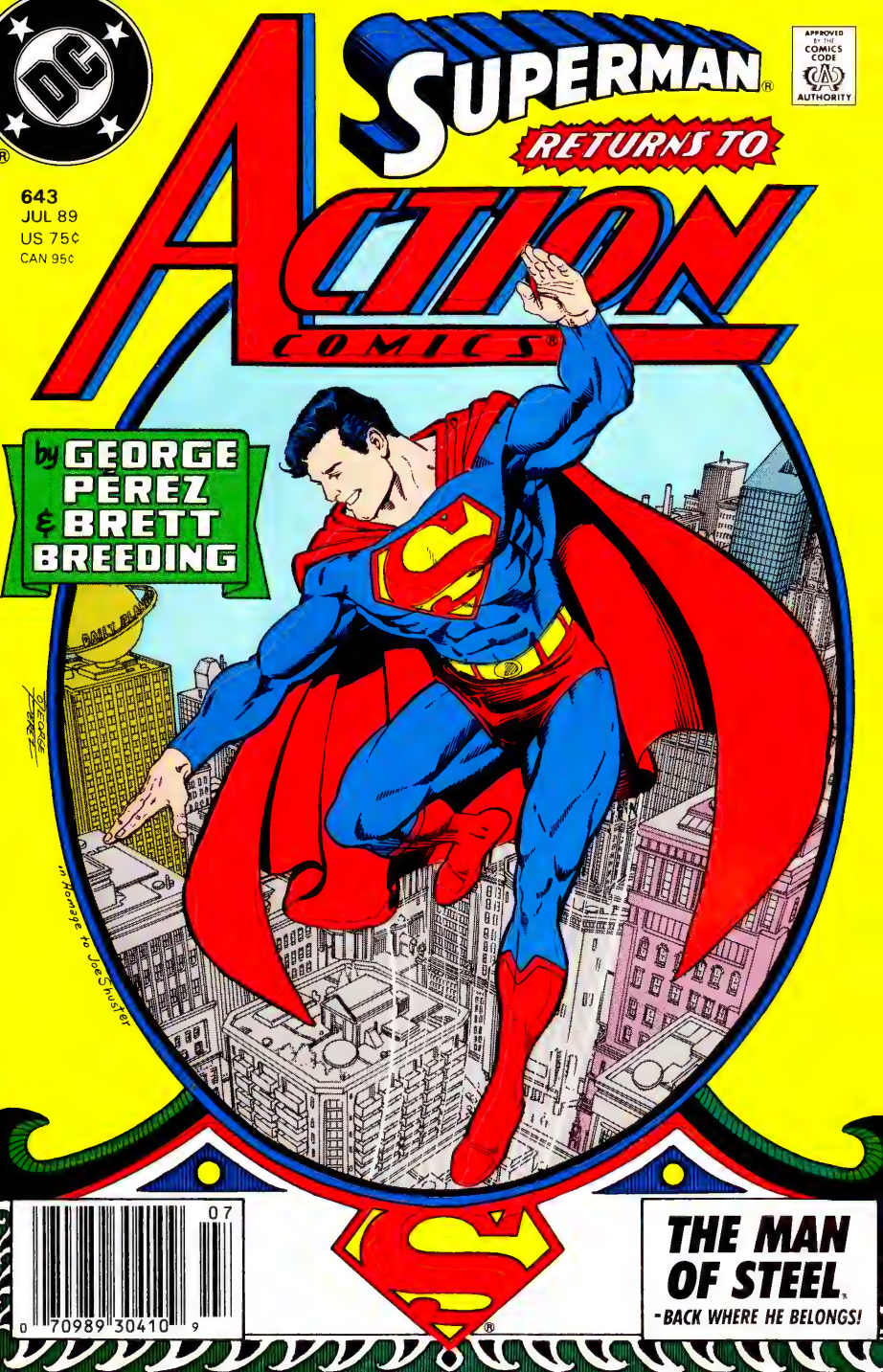
LEAVE ME...
...GET OUT OF HERE!
NO...NO...
CLARK!!
MA!
"OH, MY GOD! THEY'RE STILL IN THERE!"
NO!!

MATRIX! SHOW YOURSELF!
SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THE PEOPLE YOU CLAIM TO LOVE!
PUT HER DOWN, YOU PHONY! YOU'RE TO BLAME FOR THIS!
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT. I AM PARTLY AT FAULT.
CLARK, WHAT--?
DURING MY EXILE IN SPACE, I WAS GIVEN A KRYPTONIAN DEVICE CALLED THE ERADICATOR. REMEMBER THAT, MATRIX?
N-NO...
I DON'T KNOW HOW THE DEVICE FUNCTIONS... BUT I'VE SEEN IT WORK MIRACLES! MATRIX FOUND IT ON A SHELF WHERE I FOOLISHLY LEFT IT IN MY APARTMENT. HE ACCIDENTALLY ACTIVATED IT...
...AND SOMEHOW CAUSED IT TO LINK HIS MIND WITH MINE! THAT'S WHY HE THINKS HE'S SUPERMAN!
I AM! I AM!
THINK BACK... YOU'RE AN ARTIFICIAL LIFE FORM. YOU WERE CREATED ON ANOTHER WORLD, A WORLD THAT WAS DESTROYED BY THREE SUPER-CRIMINALS...
YOU MAY HAVE ROBBED US OF OUR POWERS, SUPERMAN, BUT THAT WILL AVAIL YOU NOTHING! WE WILL FIND A WAY TO GET THEM BACK...
...AND WE WILL DESTROY YOU AND YOUR WORLD!
NOOOOO!!
YOU ALREADY MURDERED FIVE BILLION PEOPLE, ZOD! NO MORE WILL DIE BECAUSE OF YOU!
I'LL STOP YOU--
--IF I HAVE TO KILL YOU MYSELF!


MATRIX ... THINK... OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
I'M KILLING A MURDERER!
LOOK AT ME! I'M NOT ZOD--
--AND EVEN IF I WERE, THIS WOULDN'T BRING BACK THE DEAD.
I DON'T CARE! I WILL HAVE VENGEANCE!
YOU'VE JUST PROVED YOU'RE NOT SUPERMAN!
LOOK AT YOURSELF! DOES SUPERMAN FIRE PSI-BOLTS? DOES SUPERMAN KILL?
N-NO-O-O-O!
NO. NOT ANY MORE.
A SUPERMAN MUST NOT KILL.
I LEARNED THAT THE HARD WAY.

THE GREAT POWER WHICH WE POSSESS MUST BE USED WITH CONTROL, OR ELSE...
...WE ARE MONSTERS. YES... I SEE NOW. WITHOUT THAT CONTROL...
"...WE ARE A DANGER TO ALL THOSE AROUND US."
I'M SORRY THIS HAPPENED TO YOU, MATRIX. I'LL TRY TO SET THINGS STRAIGHT--!
NO... IT'S UP TO ME TO DO THAT!
I MUST LEARN WHAT I AM TRULY TO BE. UNTIL I DO--
--I MUST NOT PUT ANOTHER SINGLE LIFE AT RISK!
MATRIX, NO! WAIT!
I CANNOT. AS LONG AS I REMAIN ON EARTH, OUR MENTAL LINK WILL CAUSE PROBLEMS. AND I DO NOT TRUST THE ERADICATOR TO SOLVE THEM.
MATRIX!
GOOD-BYE, SUPERMAN! DO NOT FEAR... I WILL NOT DISGRACE YOU!
CLARK!
LANA, SHE'S--!
SHE'S JUST PASSED OUT, MARTHA! BUT SHE DOES NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION!
YES, I CAN SEE A HAIRLINE FRACTURE AND SOME CRACKED RIBS.
WILL YOU--?
WE'LL BE FINE, SON.
I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I CAN.
TAKE YOUR TIME, DEAR.


"I WILL MISS THIS PLACE.
"THERE ARE SO MANY GOOD MEMORIES HERE..."
...SOME OF THEM ARE EVEN MY OWN.
BUT MOST OF THEM ARE HIS.
GOOD... BYE, MA... GOOD-BYE, PA.
GOOD-BYE, SMALLVILLE...
"...GOOD-BYE, EARTH."
HE CAME HERE A STRANGE VISITOR FROM ANOTHER PLANET--
--AND FOR A SHORT WHILE HE THOUGHT HE WAS OUR WORLD'S GREATEST HERO.
BUT IT TAKES MORE THAN A FIRM JAW AND AWESOME POWERS TO BE A SUPERMAN.
TODAY, MATRIX LEARNED WHAT HE IS NOT.
NOW HE GOES TO DISCOVER WHAT HE IS.
WE MAY NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN.
END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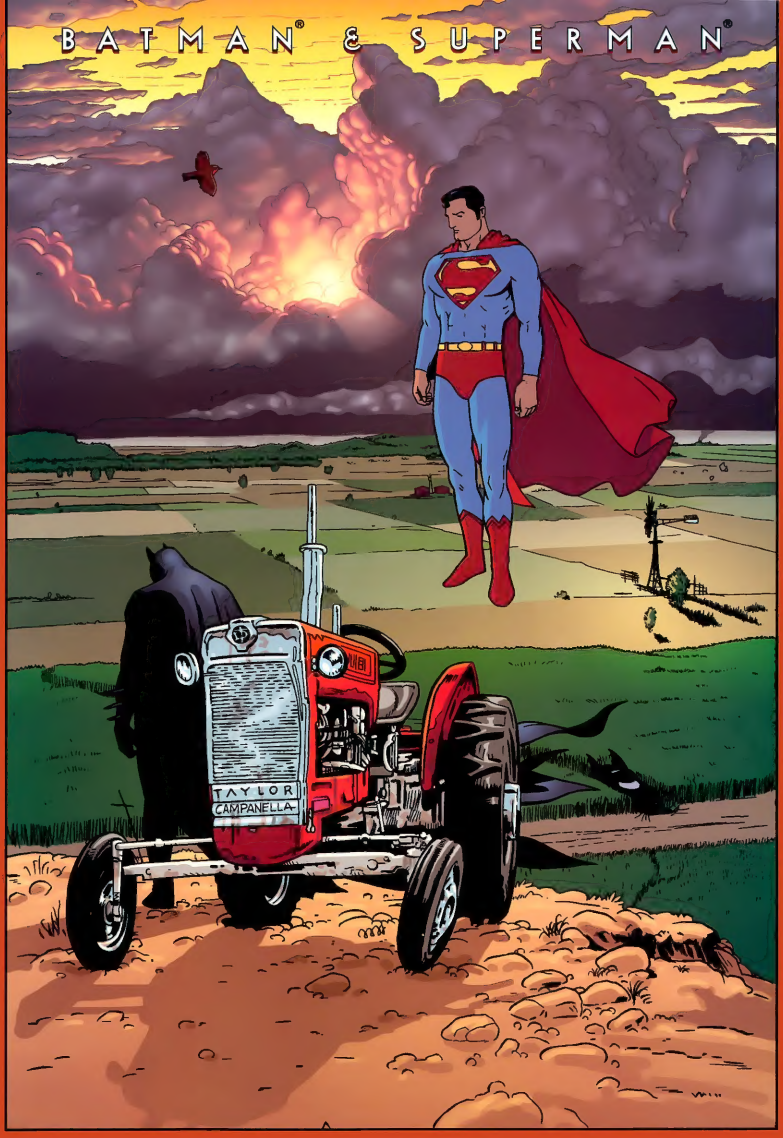

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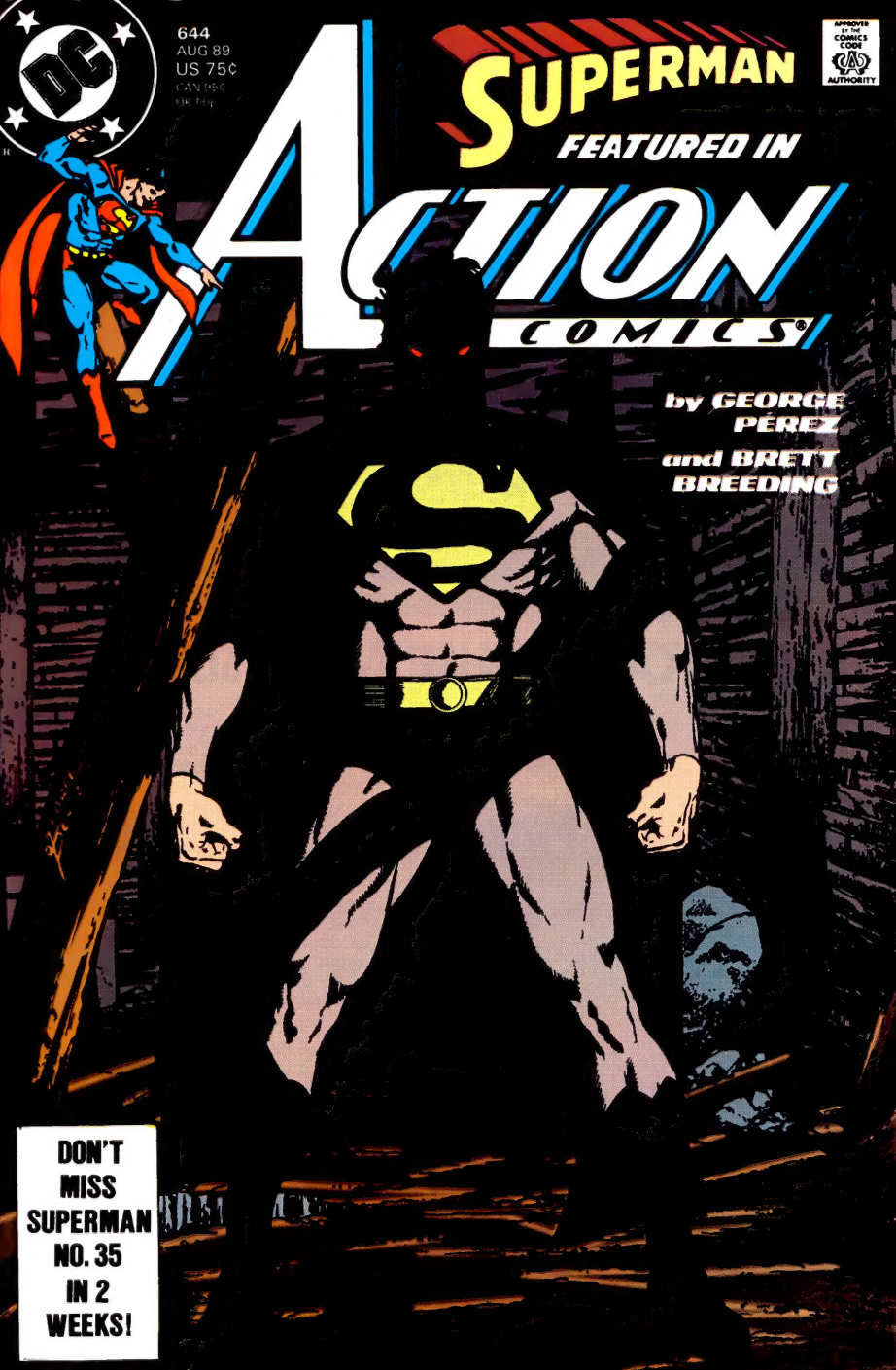
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